

CHINTAMAN AND I



Chintaman and I (1953)

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DURGABAI DESHMUKH



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Dedicated
To
PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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Preface

WHEN CHINTAMAN AND I were married in 1953 many friends and relations remarked on the difference in our habits and ways of life. They compared the blunt and outspoken Durgabai with the suave and 'westernised' C.D. Deshmukh. How, they wondered, would I, who had no social graces nor cared for them, get along with Chintaman, who was the very embodiment of style and grace.

I still remember how O.P. Mathai, Private Secretary to Prime Minister Nehru at the time, was quite taken aback at the news of our coming marriage and said: "Now let us see who is going to change whom!" Although this remark was made in a light-hearted manner, it struck a note that was to be echoed by many others. My mother was happy, but worried all the same lest our different backgrounds should lead to conflict because of lack of harmony in our outlooks. A very old friend from my days in the Law College, P.L. Harnis, at the time a senior official in the Finance Ministry where C.D. Deshmukh was the Minister, came running to me and exclaimed, "What a fool you are, you with your brashness and he with his refined taste!"

Such, in fact, was the concern of friends and relations alike that I even spoke of it to Chintaman. I told him that I was almost a rustic, not in the least a socialite, and that I did not even know how to wear fashionable footwear or go to those parties in the evenings; did he still want to marry me?

Chintaman took me to an eucalyptus tree in his garden and inscribed two Sanskrit *slokas* on its bark: it was a proposal of marriage. I accepted, and he kissed me.

The roots of my mental evolution as also my husband's are to be traced to the early decades of this century. Chintaman was born in 1896 in an orthodox Kayastha family of Maharashtra and had a brilliant academic career in school, college, and university (Bombay and Cambridge), shattering records at almost every step, and rounded it off by entering the Indian Civil Service in 1919 – again securing the first position and breaking all records except one in this prestigious examination.

With quiet competence and smooth efficiency he dealt with various types of work. Revenue settlements, secretaryship to the Round Table Conference in London on constitutional reforms for India, and debates in Legislative Assemblies came his way and were handled with a sure touch that won him the unqualified praise of the British I.C.S. Establishment. He held those very administrative posts that had been the exclusive preserve of the British, and excelled. By the 'thirties he was being sought by the Education and Finance Departments of the Government of India, but the provincial Government of the Central Provinces and Berar was firm in its refusal to release him on deputation.

The story of Chintaman Deshmukh's 26 years in the I.C.S. in British India might almost have come from the pen of a nationalist of the moderate Congress school who wanted to show the British that Indians were as fit for holding high executive posts as any Englishman, in order to invalidate the British argument for keeping Indians out of higher administrative positions, namely that the Englishman was by his inborn force of character, initiative and energy possessed of qualities which Indians lacked. He was appointed as the first Indian Governor of the Reserve Bank of India in 1943 and was later knighted.

In 1950 Chintaman Deshmukh became the third Finance Minister of free India, and by 1951, when I first met him, had

succeeded in winning the full confidence and respect of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, his Cabinet colleagues, and of the Congress party in general. That this could happen is a tribute as much to Chintaman as to Panditji and his colleagues who had the large-heartedness to recognise, and value, character and ability.

It is not widely known that Chintaman, though assured of a rewarding career in the I.C.S., had been sufficiently influenced by the independence movement to wonder whether duty required him to participate in the political struggle. He had the opportunity of consulting Bal Gangadhar Tilak on this question when the Lokmanya visited London towards the close of 1919. When Chintaman called on Tilak and expressed his doubt, the nationalist leader told him: "Our struggle for independence is sooner or later bound to succeed and then we shall need a lot of qualified young Indians to hold responsible posts. Since you have already qualified well for holding high administrative office, nothing is likely to be gained by your playing a part in the political struggle. After the struggle is over, the country will need good administrators." It would appear in retrospect as if it was destined that Chintaman should constitute a bridge between the end of British rule and the beginning of Indian independence.

Chintaman served India before independence in his way, and I had tried to serve the country and society in another way. It will, I hope, be evident to readers from the ensuing narration how Chintaman and I should have found a kindred soul in each other, notwithstanding the obvious differences.

I. Kakinada : The Formative Years

WHEN I WAS YOUNG, the social conditions in India were feudalistic. Child marriages were in great vogue. And I myself was a victim of this primitive social custom.

I was born on 15 July 1909 at Rajahmundry in the coastal district of East Godavari in Andhra. My father, B.V.N. Rama Rao of Kakinada, was a social worker, although in service; he always responded to people in need. Plague and cholera were prevalent those days. He was not afraid of helping those suffering from these dreaded diseases. He must have attended to hundreds of such victims. He used to take me with him on many of these occasions. Few would volunteer to carry the bodies of those who had died of plague or cholera, and ambulances were unknown. My father, along with three of his friends, used to be the pall-bearer. Though the streets of Kakinada were deserted, my father would take my mother and the two children – I had a younger brother, Narayana Rao – to the church, the mosque, or the burning ghat to show us how the bodies were disposed of, perhaps with a view to making us courageous enough to face the inevitable event of death.

The only mistake my father had committed was to marry me off when I was eight years of age, to an adopted son of a zamindar who had estates yielding a large income. Later my father had regretted this. He died in 1929 at the early age of thirty-six. The words he spoke to my mother, Krishnavenamma,

before he breathed his last, were that he had ruined his daughter's life by marrying her at an early age, and that my mother should give her consent if and when I wanted to marry someone else.

When I grew up to the age of fifteen I realised the significance of marriage. I told my father that I could not treat the man to whom I had been married as husband. I also told him that I would tell Subba Rao (that was his name) that I could not accept him as husband, and that I would be prepared to give him in writing to that effect. I also told him that he could marry any girl he liked. This was before the marriage was consummated.

In fairness, I must say that Subba Rao was a decent and liberal man. He understood my point. After a couple of years his elders pressed him to marry again, especially because he himself was an adopted son and there had been no children in the family for three generations. They wanted me to give a letter to the effect that I would not object to his marrying another girl. This was understandable as no parents would like to give in marriage their daughter as a second bride. Finally he married Thimmaamma, the daughter of a lawyer. They had a son, but the boy died young. Before Subba Rao passed away in the year 1941, he seemed to have told his wife that she should go to me and live under my protection as he had feared that her brothers would misappropriate the property that she inherited. She came to me inside of one year of her husband's death. I got her trained in the industrial section of Andhra Mahila Sabha. She is still with me, earning three hundred rupees a month as a teacher at the Regional Handicrafts Institute in Hyderabad. She is leading a happy and contented life.

Social inequity in those days was so bad that the Devadasi system was prevalent and was encouraged by the rich elite, with the tacit approval of the government. A Devadasi was a woman who was dedicated to the Lord of a temple and remained unmarried, but discretely utilised by the well-to-do for sensual indulgence. It was considered a status symbol to engage

Devadasis at marriages to dance in the streets in front of the palanquin carrying the bride and the bridegroom. Though I was very young, I considered this a reprehensible custom. The Devadasi system originated in the rendering of dances before the shrine by skilled performers; in return they were allotted some lands for maintenance, and it was also a condition that they remain unmarried.

Gandhiji was to visit Kakinada on 2 April 1921. I was twelve years old. I wanted the Devadasis as well as the Muslim women who were observing the feudal custom of *burqa* to meet Gandhiji. I believed that if they met Gandhiji they would change their ways of life and social customs.

I went round to the Devadasis and talked about the greatness of Gandhiji and his fight for the dignity and the rights of Indians in South Africa. They showed interest, and wanted me to arrange for them to meet Gandhiji.

This was a big challenge for me. The local hosts whom I requested to spare Gandhiji for at least ten minutes to address a gathering exclusively of women, told me that they would do it if I collected five thousand rupees for a purse to be presented to the Mahatma. I felt that they said this in a lighter vein, thinking that I would not be able to raise such a big amount.

I told my Devadasi friends of the condition. They assured me that they would collect the money and wanted me to meet them every day and enlighten them about Gandhiji's work for the freedom of the country. I did this, and also sang some patriotic songs about Gandhiji. In less than a week they collected the amount.

Another problem was the place for the meeting. It was not easy during the British Raj to secure a place where Gandhiji could address a large gathering. The hosts did not help me in this regard, but wanted the money for the purse to be presented at the Town Hall where Gandhiji was to address a public meeting. I was determined to find a place for the women's meeting, since the Devadasis and the Muslim women would not

join the public meeting. I refused to give the leaders the money I had collected.

I approached my Headmaster, Siviah Sastry Garu, to allow us to hold the meeting in the school compound which was very large and had beautiful flowering trees. I told him that if he allowed the meeting to be held there, he might be arrested. Those were the days when people were afraid of even giving a glass of water to people who worked for Gandhiji. But my Headmaster was a patriotic man. He said that he was not afraid of the consequences and that if he was arrested for the noble cause he would gladly go to jail. He further said that when a young girl like me worked for Gandhiji, an elderly man should not be afraid. I went ahead with preparations for the meeting.

The next problem was that the hosts would not agree to spare Gandhiji for more than five minutes. I said even two minutes would do. Finally I succeeded in making them agree. Since our Girls' School was on the way from the railway station to the Town Hall, they brought Gandhiji there first. More than one thousand women were waiting for his *darshan*. I made one of the elderly women present the purse. They touched Gandhiji's feet and felt so inspired that even before he started to address them they gave the jewels, bangles, necklaces, gold chains, and whatever they had on their person as additional offerings for his cause. I was told by Sri Tenneti Viswanatham later in the day that the total value of the offerings to Gandhiji at our meeting, including the purse, was twenty-five thousand rupees.

Gandhiji started to address them. Five minutes passed, ten minutes passed, half an hour passed, and still he went on speaking. I translated his speech from Hindustani into Telugu. The half-a-dozen hosts who were with him to take him to the Town Hall were very angry with me. I told them that it was not my fault, and that they could ask Gandhiji to conclude his speech, but they dared not.

Gandhiji said at the meeting that it was this kind of gathering that he liked to address, as he considered the abolition of the

Devadasi system and reform among Muslim women were among the best constructive programmes for the emancipation of women. We all went to see Gandhiji off at our school gate. When I was bidding farewell to him, he said, "Durga, get into my car." I secured a seat next to Kasturba Gandhi. There was also Prabhavatibehn (Jayaprakash Narayan's wife), who was with Gandhiji those days.

We went to the Town Hall. Sri Konda Venkatappaiah started to translate Gandhiji's speech from Hindustani into Telugu, but Gandhiji said, "Venkatappaiah, let Durga translate my speech. She did it very well at the earlier meeting." Then I translated Gandhiji's speech and he was pleased with my effort. Since then I was his translator whenever he visited the South, not only in Andhra but also in Madras (though I could only speak a smattering of Tamil).

Following Gandhiji's visit a change came about among the Devadasis, who started to get their daughters married to boys who were bold enough to face the social censure. Later, in 1937, when the dyarchical form of government was established in India and a government was formed in Madras with C. Rajagopalachari as Prime Minister (before independence they were so designated), Dr. Muthulaxmi Reddy was nominated as a member of the Legislative Council. I met Dr. Muthulaxmi Reddy and told her how Gandhiji's speech had inspired the Devadasis of Kakinada to reform their lives, and suggested that she should sponsor legislation in the Council for the abolition of the Devadasi system. She succeeded in bringing this about.

About the time of Gandhiji's visit in 1921, my mother, brother, and I had decided to wear only hand-spun and hand-woven Khadi. I made a bonfire of my mill-made clothes. I quit my school because English was being taught there. In the following year I founded the Balika Hindi Pathasala, about which more shortly

Our house in Kakinada was very spacious with some out-houses. I saw the tenant of one of the outhouses beating his wife

regularly for no fault of hers. I found this to happen in several houses in the neighbourhood. The men were educated, but that did not help them to respect their wives and to treat them as equal partners in life. I gathered about twenty girls of my age (I was then fifteen) and took out a procession in the streets, shouting slogans for the boycott of people who beat their wives and appealing to the employers to dismiss from their service those who beat their wives. In some cases we succeeded in bringing about a change, but most of the husbands did not change their ways. The women were treated merely as beñ-mates for satisfying the biological needs of men. We persuaded some such women to go to their fathers' place for some time. There were no institutions that could give them the protection which they so badly needed. I knew a few cases of cruelly treated wives committing suicide.

There was also at the time a cruel and barbarous custom of getting the woman's head shaved on the death of the husband, besides the giving up of bangles, *mangalasutra*, and *kumkum*. The underlying idea was perhaps to make them look ugly and unacceptable to men. Even young women who were in their teens were subjected to this brutal custom. It nearly happened in my mother's case. She was quite young when my father died. The relations and the kith and kin who came to offer their condolences to my mother insisted that her head be shaved. I protested against this and told them that if they persisted in their demand they had better get out of the house. My mother had lovely, long hair. She was good-looking. I requested her to resist the demand, and finally she did not yield to the pressure. Since then I found her example being emulated in several families in the neighbourhood.

In 1923 the annual session of the Indian National Congress was to be held in Kakinada. Gandhiji had by then established the Dakshina Bharata Hindi Prachar Sabha, with Madras as its headquarters, to popularise Hindi in South India, and the first session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan was to be held in

Kakinada alongside of the Congress session. The office of the Dakshina Bharata Hindi Prachar Sabha was temporarily moved to Kakinada and Pandit Hrishikesh Sharma and his wife, Sharada Devi, were in charge of the office. This gave me an opportunity for learning Hindi systematically, and also for learning national songs in Hindi.

While learning Hindi I started to teach it, too. There was a need for recruiting and training several hundred women to work as volunteers for both the Congress session and the Hindi Sammelan, besides working at the Khadi exhibition which was being organised for the occasion. There was at the time in Kakinada practically no one who learned Hindi. Therefore, the classes which I started with the help and encouragement given by my father and mother, who allowed me to use a couple of rooms in our own house, attracted hundreds of women. The number grew with every passing day. This was the beginning of the Balika Hindi Pathasala.

There were six months left for the Congress session to be held. With the help of Dinavahi Satyanarayana, who had been my teacher, I was able to teach Hindi to about 400 women during this period, and most of them were recruited as volunteers for the Congress session. But I was rejected because of my young age – I was only fourteen. Though some twenty of us had been rejected because of our young age, we were accepted as volunteers for the Hindi Sammelan. This re-kindled our waning enthusiasm.

I worked as a volunteer at the Exhibition Grounds also. It was here that I had the first opportunity of meeting Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. We had been given strict instructions by our commanders not to allow anyone inside of the Exhibition Hall without a ticket. Jawaharlal Nehru came to the Exhibition Grounds and wanted to go in; but he had neither a ticket nor the required two annas to buy one. I politely told him that he could not go in without a ticket. The organisers who saw this came to me and twisted my ears and asked me whether I knew who I

was turning out. I replied that I knew it was Jawaharlal Nehru but that I was only following my instructions and doing my duty. Then they bought a ticket for Nehru. When Panditji saw them scolding me, he told them that I had done nothing wrong, that I was only doing my duty, and that the country required such girls who could discharge their duties with courage and conviction.

The accommodation provided by my father proved too small to the growing number of women who came to join the Balika Hindi Pathasala. The Pathasala had therefore to be shifted to a bigger house offered by a philanthropic family. The activities included classes not only in Hindi but also in spinning on the charkha. A few handlooms were gradually installed for weaving cloth out of the yarn spun at the Pathasala. In addition, the women and the girls were taught patriotic songs in Hindi.

The Andhra leaders found that by this time there were two national institutions in Kakinada – the Jatiya Kala Sala and the Balika Hindi Pathasala – that satisfied the conditions laid down by Gandhiji. Among those who visited the Balika Hindi Pathasala were Chittaranjan Das, Kasturba Gandhi, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Jamnalal Bajaj, and C.F. Andrews.

When Sri Jamnalal Bajaj found at the Balika Hindi Pathasala a few hundred women learning Hindi, spinning on the charkha, weaving cloth, and singing national songs, he wanted to know who the head of the institution was. Bulusu Sambamurti, who accompanied him, introduced me as the principal and head of the institution. As I was a young girl in my early teens, he could not at first believe this. But when he did bring himself to do so, he asked me whether he could offer some money to help me run the school. I told him politely that I did not require money at the time and that if and when I did, I myself would ask him. I met Sri Jamnalal Bajaj next at the Karachi Congress session in 1931. He was not only gracious enough to recognise me, although I had grown eight years older since he saw me as a girl at Kakinada, but was also kind enough to enquire about the

progress of the Balika Hindi Pathasala and to repeat the offer of financial assistance. I repeated my earlier reply.

My visit to the Karachi Congress session was after my release from Vellore jail in 1930. I had been sentenced for one year in the Salt Satyagraha movement and during my absence the work of the Balika Hindi Pathasala was carried on by my mother. She was assisted by her younger brother, Madava Rao. The Balika Hindi Pathasala did not stop its work with the Kakinada session of the Congress but grew stronger and stronger and moved to yet another bigger house almost every year as the number of students was increasing fast. When the Dakshina Bharata Hindi Prachar Sabha at Madras started to conduct regular examinations in Hindi – Prathamik, Madhyama, Rashtrabhasha, and Visarad – under the supervision of Moturi Satyanarayana, the Balika Hindi Pathasala started regular courses to prepare students for those examinations. Every year forty to fifty women appeared for the various examinations and they all did well, some of them passing in the first and the second divisions.

The Balika Hindi Pathasala moved to its own building, consisting of two big halls and four large rooms, when a house was purchased by a close relation of mine, G.V. Subba Rao, and placed at my disposal to house the Pathasala. With the additions and alterations, the cost of the building came to about one lakh rupees. I feel ever grateful to him for this act of benevolence.

My mother soon acquired sufficient knowledge in Hindi to appear for the first two examinations. The people of Kakinada were greatly appreciative of what was being done at the Pathasala. Many of them volunteered to help the institution financially, but my family were giving me enough money to carry on its activities. From 1923 onwards visitors came from far and wide as they heard of this school at the time of the Congress session, and presented it with books in Hindi. Thus the Pathasala could build up a nucleus library with a few hundred books by eminent authors. About three hundred women appeared for the Prachar Sabha examinations between 1923

and 1930. Some of them were later instrumental in spreading the cause of Hindi to various places, either individually or by establishing small schools wherever they settled.

The British Raj identified the Hindi workers and the national institutions as agitators and kept them all under surveillance. When I was arrested in 1930 in the Salt Satyagraha movement in Madras, my mother, who had by then passed the Rashtrabhasha examination, managed to carry on the work of the Balika Hindi Pathasala. The number of students, however, dwindled considerably as they were afraid of attending an institution which was under police surveillance. When my mother also enlisted herself in the Satyagraha movement and courted imprisonment in 1932, the school virtually broke up. The students that were bold enough to attend were jailed and the properties of the school were confiscated. But its spirit persisted and some of the students later established in several parts of the city, even in remote villages and towns, their own schools where they taught Hindi and charkha. It was a tribute not only to me but to all these co-workers when, at the convocation of the Hindi Prachar Sabha at Madras in January 1946, Mahatma Gandhi presented me with a gold medal in recognition of my services to the cause of Hindi.

The Balika Hindi Pathasala was the starting point of the institutions which I was able to build up later in Madras and Hyderabad and in the districts of Andhra Pradesh.

My next major involvement in the nationalist movement under Gandhiji's leadership was during the Salt Satyagraha. This was a movement against the salt tax as a symbol of the burden imposed on the common Indian by the exploitative colonial regime.

The movement was headed in South India by C. Rajagopalachari, who launched the Satyagraha at Vedaranyam, and by T. Prakasam, who defied the salt law at Madras. Prakasam knew that he could be arrested, and he named me as the "dictator" of the movement after him. I was arrested three

times and went through as many terms of imprisonment.

During part of my term in jail, at Vellore, I was allowed to mix with the women criminal convicts as the jail authorities had developed some confidence in me. I tried to know under what circumstances these women had committed the crimes for which they were convicted. Some of them were sentenced to life imprisonment. Their narration left a very deep impression on my mind. Being uneducated and illiterate, some of them pleaded guilty to the charges even though they did not commit the crime. I had then decided to take up the study of law so that I could give such women free legal aid and assist them to defend themselves. I felt that just as a woman patient would take a woman doctor into confidence and reveal all her ailments freely, if an accused woman had the assistance of a woman lawyer she would narrate her case freely and fearlessly. Many of the women accused of murder were apt to hide important facts having a bearing on the case because they related to their love affairs.

I had occasion while in jail to agitate against the jail authorities for their not following the jail code strictly and for harassing even the political prisoners by keeping as many as seventy of them in one small room and not giving them the kind of food which they were entitled to under the jail rules.

I also revolted within my own Congress party against allowing the British to adopt a "Divide and Rule" policy by creating three classes of political prisoners – A, B, and C – who had committed identical political offence (if it were an offence) by defying the salt law. I was then A class prisoner. I requested the authorities to transfer me to C class as I found hundreds of women, very old and sick, suffering in C class. The Jail Superintendent told me that it was not in his power to transfer me from A class to C class, and that I should have said it to the magistrate at the time of my trial. After my release, I moved a resolution at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee at Guntur that political prisoners should not accept A class unless it was given to all those who committed the same offence, or

they should all go to C class, and that they should mention this at the time of their trial in the court. That resolution was passed unanimously. In spite of this, except for a very few people, Satyagrahis accepted A class, some on medical grounds and others on the ground of domestic difficulties.

I felt so strongly that this classification would result in driving a wedge between the political workers that I requested the magistrate the next time when I was tried that he should give me C class and that I would not accept A class till it was given to all my fellow prisoners. The magistrate said that he knew my family and that I deserved a better class. I said that it did not matter to me at all, and that I should like to stick to the principle that either all of us should be in A class or we should all be placed in C class.

I was released in 1933 from my third spell of imprisonment, after undergoing solitary confinement for nearly one year in Madurai Jail. After this I did not take active part in politics, one reason being that my mental health was completely shattered. As I was locked up in Madurai jail in a cell next to the death cells and gallows, I used to hear the agonising cries of the prisoners to be hanged early the next morning. This had greatly upset me and I began to get fits of hysteria. Also, the food in the jail was of bad quality and it was suspected that there was an attempt to subject me to slow poisoning. I believe there were some questions about it in the Madras Legislative Assembly. After my release, I found that some black blood was oozing from my arms. Dr. Rangachari, who was a very competent physician and whose statue can be seen at the entrance to the General Hospital in Madras, advised that I should not be permitted to enter politics again, and be put on some kind of occupational therapy.

I was not then educated, except that I had completed my fifth vernacular class in the Girls' School at Kakinada. A teacher whom I knew at the time was Goparaju Ramachandra Rao ("Gora" as he was popularly known), who was Botany

Professor at Kakinada. He taught me the rudiments of English. Since he found my assimilation of lessons good, it occurred to him in mid-1933 that I might appear in May 1934 for the Banaras Hindu University's matriculation examination as a private candidate. This paved the way for my higher studies in the Banaras Hindu University which was headed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya.

After passing the matriculation examination, I succeeded also, with the kind support provided by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya by way of scholarship in passing the Intermediate examination. I contracted chicken-pox during the examination. Generally, such candidates were prohibited from entering the examination hall. However, Pandit Malaviyaji was kind enough to permit me to sit in a separate room and answer the last two papers with the help of a scribe.

While staying on the BHU campus in the Women's College hostel, I was struck with admiration by the personality of Pandit Malaviya. He used to visit us in our College almost every day and talk to every one of us kindly. I felt inspired by the great work he had done in the establishment of the university almost single-handed. The buildings in the university filled me with joy and thrill. I used to take regular evening walks on the campus, sometimes alone and at other times along with a few of my class-mates. When I watched the buildings I used to visualise the old man going round at that ripe age to collect funds for their construction. I would also wonder whether in my lifetime I could raise even one building such as the one Madan Mohan Malaviya had constructed.

If Gandhiji's call inspired me for starting the Balika Hindi Pathasala in the early 'twenties in Kakinada, it was the inspiration that I got from Madan Mohan Malaviya in Banaras that formed the basis for my launching upon the construction programme for Andhra Mahila Sabha's buildings in Madras in the 'forties.

Since I was interested and involved in politics, I wanted to

prepare for the Bachelor of Arts degree in Politics from the BHU, but the somewhat conservative Malaviyaji would not countenance women studying a subject which, according to him, was meant essentially for men. So I decided to migrate to Andhra University. But it was not that easy. I had to engage myself in a battle of wits with the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. C.R. Reddy, before I was admitted. Dr. Reddy said that he would have been glad to give me admission but regretted that they had no women's hostel. Since the absence of a hostel for women was cited as the obstacle, I decided to try and remove it. I put in a newspaper advertisement requesting women who would like to join Andhra University for higher education, but were unable to do so in the absence of a women's hostel, to get in touch with me for organising a hostel. The response was good. About ten of us got together, located suitable premises, and arranged to start a hostel. I then presented myself again before Dr. C.R. Reddy, informed him that the hostel problem had been solved, and requested him to grant us all admission to the respective degree courses. Dr. Reddy agreed, and I eventually took the special B.A. Honours (equivalent to M.A.) examination of Andhra University, in Political Science, in 1939.

Since I had been rated in the first class in my M.A. degree, I got the Tata Scholarship to pursue my studies at the London School of Economics and also a seat in the Inner Temple to study Law. But I could not avail myself of these opportunities, as the Second World War broke out by that time. I therefore joined the Law College in Madras. I took the degree of Bachelor of Laws in 1941, and I was called to the Bar in December 1942.

II. Madras : Andhra Mahila Sabha

FOLLOWING THE INTRODUCTION of provincial autonomy and the elections, on limited suffrage, in early 1937, a popular government was formed in Madras with C. Rajagopalachari as Prime Minister. T. Prakasam was the Revenue Minister. Bulusu Sambamurti was elected unanimously Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. By this time my brother Narayana Rao had completed his education, having secured the Master's degree in Political Science from the BHU. Sambamurti was good enough to take my brother as his Personal Assistant. Thus arose the shifting of our family to Madras in the year 1937. We lived at No. 14, Dwaraka, in the Brindavan Gardens.

I was then studying for B.A. Honours at the Andhra University, Waltair. I used to go to Madras to spend the vacations with my mother. I could not stay more than a fortnight or a month at a stretch in Madras from 1937 to 1939. It was during this period that the Little Ladies of Brindavan was founded.

Whenever I went to Madras I used to see many children playing near our house. The place was not fully built upon and was strewn with sand, bricks, and stones. The children, mostly between the ages of four and ten, fascinated me and my mother. We thought we could do something for them by way of teaching them songs, dances, and stories. We succeeded in getting them to our house and gradually my mother began to teach them Hindi.

It was at this time that the Madras station of All India Radio introduced the children's programme in its broadcasts. This provided us the opportunity to train the children for participation in that programme. Sri Rajanikanta Rao and Sri Prayaga Narasimha Sastry came regularly to our house and taught the children what they should do for the next programme, and they even wrote scripts for them to practise. These activities attracted many more children to our house.

When the number of children increased considerably we thought we should start classes in dancing for girls. Though Bharata Natyam in those days was not new, it was not as yet popular and there were few classes available. We enlisted the services of a young woman from Tanjore, Smt. Ranganayaki, a well-known dance teacher.

Along with the children their mothers also came in the evenings, and my mother lost no time in starting Hindi classes for them, too. Slowly the number of children and mothers began to grow and our house proved too small to accommodate them all. Speaker Bulusu Sambamurti's house was very close to ours; he offered some accommodation and we divided the classes between the two houses. There were more than fifty women and about one hundred children. We named the group of children as Little Ladies of Brindavan, though many boys also took part in the activities. My mother was working as a Hindi teacher in the Seva Sadan High School and taught classes at Brindavan in the evenings, though it was a strain. My brother's wife, Smt. Timmabai, who worked as a teacher in a missionary school in Royapettah, was very helpful in gathering the children and organising indoor games such as carrom for them.

The Little Ladies of Brindavan was growing so fast in numbers and in activities that we had to find a bigger house and establish the institution on a sound basis, including the raising of funds for paying the teachers we had appointed for dancing and music and other activities.

Chennapuri Andhra Maha Sabha was at the time a well-

established institution in Madras. It was founded by the resident Andhras in Madras City, as a social, cultural, and recreational organisation open to both men and women. The dramatics section of the institution was the most active. At the suggestion of Bulusu Sambamurti, as president of the Chennapuri Andhra Maha Sabha, our Little Ladies of Brindavan became a women's and children's section of the Sabha. Having completed my education at Waltair I came to Madras and joined the Law College in 1939, and started to work for the women's and children's section of the Andhra Maha Sabha.

I was one of the three secretaries of the organising committee formed to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the Chennapuri Andhra Maha Sabha. We planned it on a grand scale and the programme was spread over two weeks. The women's and children's section took an active part in the celebrations.

As the Andhra Maha Sabha was essentially a club and its membership consisted largely of men, its activities were mostly tailored to suit their needs. We therefore felt after some time that we should function as an independent body, with the name of Andhra Mahila Sabha, with our own programmes to meet the social, educational, and cultural needs of women.

The years 1940-42 were a bad period for the whole country. The clouds of the Second World War were spreading over the Indian sky and there were rumours that enemy bombers might strike Madras City any day. This was also a crucial period for the Andhra Mahila Sabha.

Although the decision to separate ourselves from the Chennapuri Andhra Maha Sabha was a welcome development, it had brought in its trail many challenges. To start with, an action programme had to be chalked out to give meaning and content to the decision. Then, it should have its own buildings.

We had taken up an important activity: a condensed course of education for adult women, of the kind from which I had benefited. We felt that it was necessary to provide coaching for adult women to prepare them for an examination equivalent to

Matriculation or Secondary School Leaving Certificate. Many women became destitute, deserted, or widowed, and were in need of acquiring some skill or education to earn their living. Most of them were drop-outs, having discontinued their education after marriage in their early teens. Some of them had studied only up to third or fourth class and none beyond the fifth class. A course for them meant that the entire process of ten years' education required for becoming a matriculate had to be condensed into two or at most three years, with intensive coaching. The Banaras Hindu University allowed women to appear as private candidates for an Admission Examination equivalent to Matriculation. Women were exempted from the subject of arithmetics and instead they could study domestic science. We therefore decided to train the women for the Admission Examination of the Banaras Hindu University.

We acquired a suitable house at No. 2, Luz Church Road, and moved into it. The classes for the BHU Admission Examination and in Hindi, music, and dance were soon in full swing. However, we could not continue in this building for more than six months as the number of students grew with every passing day and ran into hundreds. Therefore we moved to the more spacious No. 1, Luz Church Road. It had been built during the time of the East India Company and had big halls with several underground cellars. Some teachers were recruited, among them Sri Nalinikanta Rao took complete charge of the BHU Admission Examination course. With expenses mounting, we had to mobilise more resources and therefore embarked on a campaign for enrolling patrons, donors, and life members for the Andhra Mahila Sabha. Within one year we had more than three hundred life members on our rolls.

Many women, helpless and needy, who could not afford to study, came to us. They had to earn money immediately to have two meals a day and to look after their children. We had therefore to find out some avenues for employing them and paying them wages every day. Sewing, tailoring, and embroidery

were familiar trades already. We decided to open some new sections: spinning, weaving, hand-made paper, bamboo, cane work, and mat weaving. The open space at the new premises was large enough to construct a big work shed there. We had to buy charkhas, sewing machines, etc., as also equipment for making hand-made paper. All this required an outlay of at least five thousand rupees. It was like a God-send when Maharaja Vikramadeva Varma of Jeypore happened to visit Madras at the time. We invited him to visit our institution. He was very pleased with what we were doing and readily donated five thousand rupees. The expansion of the work centre took place in 1941. We were able to pay at least two rupees per day to the women who joined the work classes, by selling the products. The same year we celebrated the third anniversary of the Andhra Mahila Sabha with Sarojini Naidu in the chair.

In the year 1942 we sent the first batch of our students to Banaras to appear for the Admission Examination as private candidates. The air-raid scare was growing. People were afraid even to move out of their houses, not to speak of travelling places. The question before us was whether we should send them to Banaras at all: what if the bridges should be blown up? But we were determined to go ahead. I offered to go with the students to Banaras. I was at the time an apprentice at law in the chambers of Sri Raghava Rao and was qualified to be called to the Bar. However, postponing my enrolment as an advocate, I decided to accompany the students who included G. Leela, Varalakshmi, Jamunabai, my sister-in-law Timmabaiamma, Indira, daughter of the late Dr. Rangachari, and Hemalata Prabhu. Though eighteen students were expected to go to Banaras, some of them dropped out as they or their parents were afraid of taking the risk involved in travel during war time. Sri Nalinikanta Rao came with us so that he could be of help to the students in preparing for the examination.

We had to change at Itarsi and take another train for Banaras via Jabalpur. We had to wait for about ten hours at Itarsi to

board the train for Banaras. So we booked in a hotel near the railway station. Around midnight four thieves broke into our rooms and tried to run away with our suitcases and other luggage. Fortunately, I, Nalinikanta Rao, and a few students were awake. We chased the thieves and overpowered some of them and got back our belongings. It did not matter that in the encounter with the burglars we were left with some bruises. Not only we did not become panicky but we had enjoyed the nocturnal adventure in a new place and became confident of ourselves.

Finding a place for our stay in Banaras proved difficult. Eventually we could find a shelter in the Vijayanagaram palace. The Maharajkumar of Vijayanagaram ("Vizzy") and his mother were very sympathetic and allowed us to use a part of the palace to make our own messing arrangements.

We had a pleasant time riding in ekkas, going round in the lanes for making small purchases, visiting the Viswanatha temple, bathing in the holy Ganges, and finally taking a boat ride. We also visited the Harishchandra and Manikarnika Ghats. And of course we visited the university founded by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, once my alma mater.

The results of the Banaras examination were published in the month of June and our percentage of passes was ninety. This was really heartening. However, there arose some unexpected and unforeseen problems when some of the successful students who sought admission in the Intermediate class in the city colleges of Madras were told that they had not completed the prescribed ten years schooling, and had had only two years of instruction. The Andhra Mahila Sabha had to fight for their cause on the ground that the Admission Examination of the BHU they passed was equivalent to the S.S.L.C. or Matric examination of the Madras University. We also argued that under the university ordinances no university could refuse admission to a student from another university, provided he/she was qualified for admission to university class and had secured

the requisite percentage of marks. After some correspondence between the Banaras and the Madras Universities we established our point, and many of our women who had obtained the qualifying marks gained admission in Queen Mary's, Presidency, and Women's Christian College. And some of the students who had obtained more than sixty percent marks secured admission in science courses.

This led us to think why we ourselves should not coach women students for the Intermediate examination. We decided to have them and started the classes in 1943. To start with, we had only eight students: Jamunabai, Bharati, Netrakanti Lakshmi Narasamma, and G. Leela were among them. The teachers we employed included Anant Rao Baji, S.K. Rao, Ekambaram, and Kamalapati. The first two were preparing for their doctoral courses at the Madras University. The sum we paid them was just enough to defray their expenditure on conveyance to attend our school. The result of their two years' coaching were one hundred percent passes. We felt happy when Bharati later married Dr. A.R. Baji. Our private coaching for Intermediate examination continued thereafter uninterruptedly. As more and more students joined the classes we had to increase the teacher strength.

Women outside of Madras City who came to know of our condensed course of education for adult women started to apply for admission. We were willing to take them but our problem was that there was no hostel facility. We found no alternative but to start a hostel in Madhava Bagh for half a dozen women. Km. Jamunabai volunteered to stay in the hostel, at my request, as an honorary warden.

The Mahila Vidyalaya thus established itself as an appendage of the Andhra Mahila Sabha with provision for preparing women students for the Banaras Hindu University Admission Examination and for the Intermediate examination of the Madras University.

Another activity of the Sabha was the publication of the

Andhra Mahila as a monthly magazine. This was my brother's brain-child. He argued that such a magazine was necessary, especially during the war years when the Sabha members had left Madras and were dispersed at several places because of the air-raid scare. The only way to keep them in touch with one another and with the Sabha would be through the forum of a magazine. Since my brother was thrown out of government service due to his suspected political activities, he was in a position to devote full time to write, print, and publish the journal. Sri Mallavarapu Visweswara Rao contributed to the growth of the *Andhra Mahila* as its Associate Editor in its initial stages.

Until the Andhra Mahila Sabha established its own press in Madras three years later, the journal was printed in the Hindi Prachar Sabha Press. Sri Avaste, its Manager, spared no effort in printing the magazine according to the schedule. I remember with gratitude how well-known writers such as Kanuparti Varalakshamma, Sthanapati Rukminamma, and Nayani Krishnakumari enriched the pages of the *Andhra Mahila* with their contributions. The picture of my brother bringing the bundles of printed copies from the press in Thyagarayanagar, the hostel girls folding and wrapping up the copies and pasting addresses and postage stamps, and Sugunamani taking them to the post office for despatch can never leave my mind. Social service was one hundred per cent voluntary effort in those days. *Andhra Mahila* had later to stop publication for a couple of years but reappeared under a new title *Vijaya Durga*, in English besides Telugu.

Thus, between 1937 and 1946, the Andhra Mahila Sabha grew from its small beginnings – Little Ladies of Brindavan – to a full-fledged institution. Its membership during 1944-46 was seven to eight hundred and its activities were varied: Hindi classes, classes for the BHU Admission Examination with hostel attached, classes in music and dancing and an industrial section with a production unit attached. It was a proud moment for all

of us when Mahatma Gandhi laid the foundation-stone for the first building of Andhra Mahila Sabha in Madras in January 1946. The dream inspired by Malaviyaji came true!

III. The National Scene

FORTUNE SMILED ON ME in my legal practice. By 1946, within four years of my being called to the Bar, I was one of the leading criminal lawyers in Madras. Whenever I accepted a brief in which women were involved, I would remember my discussions with the women convicts in Vellore jail.

To my pleasant surprise, I was elected member of the Constituent Assembly as a Congress candidate towards the close of 1946. The first sitting of the Constituent Assembly was held on 7 December.

I made it a point to attend every sitting of the Constituent Assembly and also of the Congress Assembly Party which was held almost every alternate day in the Constitution House. At the party meetings we used to discuss threadbare the provisions of the Draft Constitution. Besides Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Sir Gopalaswamy Iyengar took great pains in explaining the significance of the important provisions such as Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy, and the paramountcy of the Princely States. Sir B.N. Rau, a constitutional expert, used to explain the constitutions of several countries for comparison. Dr. Ambedkar was in charge of the drafting of the Constitution. On occasions he would raise objections on certain points. After a thorough discussion the issues were settled by vote.

I took active interest in these discussions and so did some

other lady members such as Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Renuka Ray. I was a member of the Steering Committee. Sardar Patel asked Sir B.N. Rau to entrust me with the work of studying the amendments proposed by members and putting them on the agenda for discussion in the House. I must have moved more than 750 amendments – some on my own and some in collaboration with Sri K. Santhanam and Sri Ananthasayanam Iyengar.

The level of working of the Constituent Assembly, which also functioned as the Provisional Parliament, was of the highest order. There was always decorum and discipline in the House. Sri Mavlankar, the Speaker, conducted the proceedings with all the dignity that the House deserved. Almost every member had a chance to participate in the debates. The question hour used to be instructive. The visitors' galleries were always packed, among others with foreigners, particularly during the question hour. It is amusing to recall that some members after making a speech or asking a question used to run up to the Press gallery to make sure that their contribution was recorded and would be published in the newspapers.

I was a member of the Panel of Chairmen of the Provisional Parliament. Speaker Mavlankar gave me several opportunities to preside and conduct the proceedings of the House in his absence. Once when I was in the Chair and a member addressed me "Sir", several members protested and said that I should be addressed "Madam Chairman". I, however, said that it did not matter how I was addressed, that it was constitutionally correct to address the Chair as Sir, and that we should not bother about sex differences in the matter.

I am happy to record that I was in the Chair when some important Bills relating to Banaras Hindu University, Aligarh Muslim University, and Viswa Bharati University came up for discussion in the House. I was also in the Chair during part of the discussion on the Hindu Code Bill.

I was particularly gratified for being associated with the

debate on the Hindu Code Bill. Drawn up by a committee appointed in 1941 to work out a rationalised Hindu personal law, the Bill was introduced in the Provisional Parliament in 1947. The Bill was the culmination of the efforts made by social reformers from the early nineteenth century onwards for improvement in the status of women.

Women in ancient India had enjoyed a fair measure of equality with men in all spheres of activity. The Rigveda, the Upanishads, and Kautilya's *Arthashastra* bear testimony to this. The Upanishads expounded the idea of man and woman as equal halves of a divine unity, each complementing the other and incomplete without the other. Women philosophers of the Upanishadic period such as Brahnavadini and Gargi crossed swords in the conferences of Rishis such as Yagnavalkya convened at the court of Rajarshi Janaka of Videha. The Buddhist age continued this Brahmanical tradition of the equality of sexes, and their nuns and Bhikshunis played an important part by rendering missionary service as equals of men. However, deterioration in the status of women set in as a consequence of frequent invasions from outside and disturbed social conditions. Strict seclusion of women became the rule. The *purdah* system and the practice of *sati* (immolation of widow on the husband's pyre) grew, and under the joint family system women were excluded from succession to property.

The advent of the British on the Indian scene resulted in the introduction of an alien culture and a new economic order. The middle-class women began to adjust themselves to the new situation and took to the new education system introduced by the British. As far back as 1878 Indian girls began to study in the universities and a decade later voyaged to far-off countries to study medicine and law. However, provision of higher education for women was slow and halting.

Mahatma Gandhi brought about a dynamic change among women. In response to his call women came out in large numbers to participate in the struggle for India's freedom. It was

in this political awakening that we find the renaissance of Indian womanhood. In the 1936 elections many women entered legislatures, municipal councils, and local boards. The women members of the Constituent Assembly made significant contributions to the deliberations.

Legislation for the improvement of the lot of women began to be enacted even during the British rule. The earliest reform was the abolition of *sati*, at the instance of Raja Ram Mohun Roy who also carried on a campaign against other social evils such as female infanticide, polygamy, and the denial of education to women. Among other landmarks were the enactment in 1865 of the Hindu Widows Remarriage Act, and the 1929 enactment, popularly known as the Sharada Act, prohibiting child marriage by prescribing minimum ages of marriage for both girls and boys. The Hindu Code Bill sought to carry this process forward by prohibiting polygamy, making divorce less difficult, and providing for succession to property for the daughters, the mother, and the widow.

However, opposition to the Hindu Code Bill was so strong that only four clauses of the Bill had been passed by the time the Provisional Parliament was dissolved in 1951. Orthodox resistance to the reform was dramatised during the ensuing general elections, the first to be held on the basis of adult franchise under the new Constitution. From East Allahabad Jawaharlal Nehru's chief opponent was Prabhu Dutt Brahmachari, a former Congressman-turned-ascetic. Brahmachari offered to withdraw from the contest if the Prime Minister assured him in writing that the Hindu Code Bill would be dropped. Nehru's characteristic response was to offer to fight the election on the very issue of the Code.

It was due largely to Nehru's prodding that India's first Parliament, convened in 1952, revived the lapsed Hindu Code Bill in parts, and enacted a series of legislative measures for improving the status of women. The Hindu Marriages Act, which came into operation in May 1955, ended the age-old

institution of marriage as a one-sided sacrament. It enforced monogamy on both the parties, and permitted divorce on the grounds of adultery, desertion, cruelty, insanity, or incurable disease. The Hindu Succession Act, which became effective from June 1956, gives the daughter and other defined female relations a share in the property of Hindu males dying intestate (making of wills is confined to a small minority). Before this Act was legislated, property could pass only to sons or, in the absence of male issue, to brothers and other male agnates and cognates entitled to perform religious rites for the deceased. The line of succession bore no relation to the direction of natural love and affection. The daughter, the mother, and the widow have now been given a share in the self-acquired property of the deceased.

The Dowry (Prohibition) Act was legislated in 1961. There is, however, a considerable gap between these enactments and actual social practice. The practice of dowry began as an arrangement for the protection of the bride by endowing her with *Streedhana* (woman's personal property). But in course of time it became an instrument of exaction by the parents of the bridegroom, to such a point that parents began to lament the birth of a daughter as a curse. The evil continues even today, despite the passing of the Dowry (Prohibition) Act. Similarly, the Child Marriage (Restraint) Act continues to be largely ignored. Women rarely go to court to enforce their property rights. There is still much to be done, therefore, to educate public opinion in favour of equal rights for women and to secure compliance with the laws.

I had first met Sardar Patel at the Karachi Congress session in 1931. He presided over that session. Sri Jamnalal Bajaj introduced me to Sardar Patel, who smiled and said: "Oh, you are the girl-principal of the national institution?" It was my pleasure to work with him in the Constituent Assembly as a member of the Steering Committee, of which Babu Rajendra Prasad was the Chairman.

Once, when I had criticised the Budget as the rich man's budget which showed no concern for the common man's welfare, Dr. John Matthai, the Finance Minister, said that I was too much concerned with the man-in-the-street. There was an uproar in the House and some members asked Dr. Matthai to apologise to me for using those unworthy words. I said that there was no need for Dr. Matthai to apologise and that he meant no offence. A little later Sardar Patel, who sat in the front bench, came to me and said: "You are a noble and generous-hearted woman. I appreciate what you have said."

Sardar Patel expressed his appreciation for me a second time when I made my speech in Hindi. From then on he started to invite me for lunch almost once a week. As I was not trained in talk manners and drawing-room conversations, I did not attend the Sardar's lucheons for some weeks. After the fourth invitation, one morning the Sardar's Personal Assistant came to my house and asked me whether I was attending Sardar Patel's luncheon that day. I said no. He asked me why? I said that I myself had a couple of guests. Then he said that Sardar Patel had sent him to bring me along with him, and that I could take the two guests with me. I had no escape. I went. I found my seat next to Sardar Patel's.

I invited Sardar Patel and his daughter Maniben to visit the Andhra Mahila Sabha building when they visited Madras. He accepted the invitation and spent an hour at the Sabha office showing keen interest in the Sabha's activities.

Once Chief Justice Kania of the Supreme Court sent for me – I was practising in the Supreme Court at the time – and said, "Look, Durgabai, you know that we have a very poor library for the Court. I know that Sardar Patel has great affection for you. Could you please mention to him that the provision of fifty thousand rupees for the library is very inadequate and that it should be raised to one lakh?" I mentioned this to the Sardar, who said: "Go and inform the Chief Justice that it will be done." I later found that most of the

books of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's library were given to the Supreme Court, in addition to raising the library's budget to one lakh rupees.

Another occasion I was to see the Sardar was for getting a site allotted for the Andhra Education Society School building in Delhi. The Society was organised on my initiative to provide education for the children of the local Telugu-speaking people. I understood that when the Sardar's Secretary, Sri V. Shankar, mentioned to him that I wanted an appointment with him, Sardar said: "Let her come. I know that she never asks for a personal favour. It must be for some public cause." When I was called in, I requested him to allot a site for the school building. The Sardar called Sri Shankar and told him to have some sites shown to me and get allotted whatever I select. The next day the Chief Commissioner of Delhi, Sri Shankar Prasad, telephoned to invite me to go with him and see the possible sites. I was later told by Sri Shankar that two days before Sardar died he asked Sri Shankar whether a site had been allotted for the school.

Jawaharlal Nehru had started to work on plans for the social and economic development of independent India. As President of the Indian National Congress and as Prime Minister he had set up many committees, at both the government and the party levels, for drawing up development plans in various spheres of activity. These included the different stages of education: there was a commission on university education under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan; one on secondary education under the chairmanship of Dr. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar; and another on primary education under the chairmanship of Sri B.G. Kher, Prime Minister of Bombay Presidency. It was also Nehru's idea to set up a high-level machinery for economic planning. The idea of a Planning Commission was thus mooted with the intention that it would advise the government on the formulation and implementation of economic plans.

Dr. John Matthai was the first Finance Minister in Nehru's

Cabinet. Rumours were current that he was not in favour of setting up a Planning Commission. It was within my knowledge then – and this was proved by later events – that on this issue there arose serious differences of opinion between him and the Prime Minister, and they ended with the resignation of Dr. Matthai from the Cabinet.

Nehru then invited Sri Chintaman Dwarakanath Deshmukh to help him in drafting the resolution to be moved by the government in Parliament for setting up a Planning Commission. Deshmukh was then Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. Nehru and Deshmukh had had discussions earlier and Deshmukh was in complete agreement with him on the need for a body such as the Planning Commission. So he readily accepted the invitation.

IV. I Marry Chintaman

I HAD OCCASION to visit Bombay in early 1950 in connection with the Mudgal corruption case. I was on a committee of Parliament, of which T.T. Krishnamachari was Chairman, to look into the corruption charges against Sri Mudgal, a member of the Provisional Parliament. After our enquiry a report was submitted to Parliament by Krishnamachari on behalf of the Committee. I added a few comments of my own, as part of the report, and called them “Do’s and Don’ts” – they were in the nature of a code of ethics for public men in general and for members of Parliament and ministers in particular.

While in Bombay I asked a friend, who was a senior economist in the Reserve Bank of India, whether I could see the Governor of the Bank. He replied: “The Governor does not see visitors unless they have some specific and official work with him.” I had neither. I had only wanted to see him as I had heard from common friends a good deal about his stewardship of the Reserve Bank of India as the first Indian Governor, and his great qualities of head and heart which had endeared him to one and all who knew him. My friend regretted that he could not fix up an appointment for me.

Chintaman Deshmukh assumed office as Finance Minister in May 1950. I was to come to know later that when Jawaharlal Nehru invited Chintaman to join his Cabinet as Finance Minister, Chintaman first suggested the names of C.

Rajagopalachari and N. Gopalaswamy Iyengar who, in his opinion, were better suited to hold the portfolio of Finance than he was. Pandit Nehru told Chintaman that when he had sounded Rajagopalachari, Rajaji told him that C.D. Deshmukh was the most suitable person for the Finance portfolio; Gopalaswamy Iyenger, too, expressed the same opinion. Coming from two of the most eminent statesmen, this was indeed a great tribute to Chintaman Deshmukh.

One day I found Sri Sri Prakasa, the Commerce Minister, and my friend from West Bengal, Smt. Renuka Ray, sitting by my side in the Provisional Parliament. Sri Sri Prakasa asked me whether I knew Chintaman Deshmukh. I told him that I had heard much about him, but I had not had the opportunity of meeting him. I also informed him of how my attempt to see him in Bombay did not succeed. He said that he wanted to introduce me to Deshmukh, as I was an active member of the House and a member of the Panel of Chairmen. I told him that I would have occasions to meet him in the course of our work.

Deshmukh presented his budget for the year 1951-52 in March 1951. During my speech in the House, I criticised the budget on the same grounds as I had criticised Dr. John Matthai's – as a rich man's budget with no provisions for the poor. Incidentally, I spoke in Hindi, which was much appreciated by several members including the Finance Minister.

I found to my surprise that I was nominated as a member of the Select Committee on the Finance Bill. (I came to know later that no woman member had ever been on this Committee.) I remember that at one of the sittings of the Committee I asked Deshmukh: "Sir, you have imposed a tax on tobacco. It is a good thing, because you save poor people from smoking and ruining their health. But what about allocating the revenue from this source for the implementation of plans for the poor, the destitute, the deserted, the blind, the orphans, etc.?" He said: "You will see it in the revised budget proposals, under the head 'Social Welfare'." I remember Dr. Ambedkar remarking during

the debate on the revised budget proposals, pointing at me, "This woman has a bee in her bonnet." He classified women into three categories – females, women, and ladies, and placed me in the category "women"!

Some time later there arose an occasion for me to meet the great man in his chamber in the Parliament House. I think I was the seventh in the queue. When my turn came, I told him of my not being able to meet him in Bombay earlier. Then I came to business. I said: "I have come to make a request as a social worker. As Finance Minister, you have made for the first time a provision for Social Welfare in the budget. I would request you to visit the Andhra Mahila Sabha, a premier social welfare organisation in Madras, and inaugurate its maternity ward with a labour room, built as a nucleus of our Mother-Child Services." I gave him details of the Sabha's activities. He kept silent for a while and then said that he would accept the invitation with pleasure.

In October 1951, on the Vijayadasami day, my brother, his wife, and I celebrated the marriage of my niece Leela with Madhav Rao Baji, an engineer of the Andhra Pradesh Road Transport Corporation, in Delhi at my quarters at 21 Canning Lane. Chintaman attended the marriage. He also came for the reception in the evening and stayed on, at my request, for dinner. The Prime Minister, his daughter Indira Gandhi and sisters Vijayalakshmi Pandit and Krishna Hutheesing also attended the marriage and the reception.

After the coming into force of the new Constitution in January 1950, I had no inclination to continue in politics and public life. I had much preferred to apply my time and energy to building up social welfare institutions. But Jawaharlal Nehru did not agree to my going back to Madras. He wanted me to contest the first general elections to the Lok Sabha.

I should ordinarily have contested from Madras, but this had to be given up in favour of T.T. Krishnamachari. I was put up as Congress candidate for the Rajahmundry constituency, from

where I had been away for nearly fifteen years. I lost to a communist.

Having ceased to be a member of Parliament, I had decided to leave Delhi and return to Madras to resume my legal practice and to look after the activities of the Andhra Mahila Sabha. But Pandit Nehru did not permit me to leave Delhi.

Once he called me and handed over a cheque for twenty-five thousand and asked me to organise relief work in the Rayalaseema districts of Andhra which had suffered from drought and famine. Later I learned that he had done this to keep me active and engaged, and to prevent me from going back to Madras. I completed that work in a month and a half. As soon as I returned to Delhi, the Prime Minister called me and said that he would like me to go to China on the first Indian goodwill delegation to be sent after India became a Republic. The delegation was leaving in the second week of May 1952 for six weeks. The leader was Vijayalakshmi Pandit.

I accepted the assignment. The delegation spent six weeks in China, visiting the various provinces. I made a close study of the judicial system of China and also the minorities particularly their culture and social and economic activities. I submitted a report to the Prime Minister on the working of the Chinese judicial system, with special reference to the functioning of family courts. I sent a copy to the Finance Minister, who wrote me a letter in highly appreciative terms.

I had been much impressed by the concept of family courts. I thought that for a country of India's size, establishment of family courts as part of its judicial system would be of immense help in many ways. It would not only reduce the workload of the High Courts and the Supreme Court but also provide a good forum for preventing family break-ups and restoring happiness to men, women, and children, making it possible for them to remain united. I had also the opportunity of studying the functioning of family courts in Japan and in Russia. My admiration for such courts began to grow and I missed no chance of recom-

mending this innovation under Indian conditions. I have noted that judges such as Chief Justice Dr. P.B. Gajendragadkar and Mr. Justice M.C. Chagla, who have seen the system working in some of these countries, have also recommended the setting up of family courts as part of the Indian judicial system. Alas, twenty-seven years have passed and not a step has been taken in this behalf though, according to reports, fifty thousand cases are pending in the Supreme Court and twenty to thirty thousand cases each in High Courts.

After I returned from China in June 1952, Sri M.O. Mathai telephoned me one day at about nine in the morning and asked me to meet him in the Parliament House. Sri Mathai informed me that I was being appointed Governor of Madhya Pradesh and the recommendation to the President was waiting for the P.M.'s signature. He himself had told the Prime Minister that I was a young lady and should be given a challenging assignment instead of a gubernatorial post in which my talents would not be of any use. Pandit Nehru was himself then reconsidering the matter. What clinched the matter was, it seems, a note from a member of his Cabinet, whom he considered as the most charming of his colleagues, suggesting that I be appointed member of the Planning Commission with the charge of Social Services. This Cabinet colleague, it turned out, was none other than the Finance Minister.

I was thus appointed a member of the Planning Commission in June 1952. There were five other members: Nehru, who was the Chairman, C.D. Deshmukh, V.T. Krishnamachari, Gulzarilal Nanda, and G.L. Mehta. I was given the charge of Social Services.

It is a comprehensive subject. My responsibilities covered subjects related to several ministries such as Education, Health, Rehabilitation, Housing, Labour, Public Cooperation, and Social Welfare proper, including crime and criminal administration. Chintaman Deshmukh and I thus became colleagues in the Planning Commission, he in charge of Finance



Extraordinary witness to an extraordinary marriage (22 January 1953)



Chintaman and I (at a High School function, March 1977)

and I with Social Services.

I joined the Planning Commission when the First Five Year Plan was already in the final stages of drafting and financial outlays had been finalised. To my surprise, I found that there was no provision as such for Social Welfare in the plan outlay. It would have been very difficult to secure any funds outside of the limits already finalised. But Deshmukh, although he belonged to the steel frame, had a humane approach and a constructive mind that could appreciate the viewpoint of others. He understood the problem that in the absence of any real assistance the social welfare institutions would not have any support and that it would be futile to express lip sympathy to the poor, the destitute, the orphans, and other handicapped persons while not providing for action in a realistic way. It was this view of the Finance Member that was responsible for the creation of the Central Social Welfare Board with a provision of forty million rupees which played a big role later in the servicing of voluntary welfare institutions. (In the second plan, the allotment for the Board was one hundred fifty million and in the third plan it was raised to two hundred eighty million plus a provision of thirty million for child welfare services.) Pandit Nehru appreciated Chintaman's advice and accepted it.

It was again C.D. Deshmukh's foresight and appreciation of the need for giving a place to population control and family planning in the first plan, urged by me as Member-in-charge, that resulted in the provision of six million rupees. The family planning programme thus came to be officially recognized for the first time. Till then only a few voluntary agencies were running clinics with help from Lady Dhanwanti Rama Rau of the All India Family Planning Association, the Indian chapter of the International Family Planning Association. I appointed a committee, with Lady Rama Rau as Chairman, to go round the country and study the working of the existing family planning organizations – about one hundred of them – and to suggest suitable grants to enable them to discharge their functions more

effectively. Five million out of the provision of six million rupees went to these voluntary organisations to strengthen their efforts; many of them would otherwise have had to close down.

Deshmukh visited Madras on 17 August 1952 to inaugurate the Maternity and Labour Ward of the Andhra Mahila Sabha. The inauguration went off well. The programme included a reception at the Vanita Bala Vihar Park and a dinner at the Andhra Mahila Sabha premises at Luz Church Road in Mylapore. I remember that at dinner time I had a swollen foot, the result of a slip during the day. I had not paid much attention to it. Deshmukh noticed it, made anxious enquiries, and asked Dr. Natarajan and Dr. Ramamoorthy, who were connected with the Sabha's activities and were present at the dinner, to take care of my foot. The next day, I went to see him off at the airport and presented him with a silver set of puja wares for his mother who, I had heard, was deeply religious-minded. I also gave him some *idli* and *sambhar*.

One afternoon in November 1952 my telephone started to ring. My friend Sri P.S. Narayana Prasad, who had earlier worked with the Reserve Bank of India and was then working with the International Monetary Fund, and was staying as my guest, picked up the receiver and was surprised to hear the voice of his one-time boss – the Finance Minister. He gave the receiver to me. Deshmukh told me that his mother was staying with him and that he wanted to introduce me to her. Could I join them for tea at five-thirty the next day? I accepted the invitation.

I did not attach much significance to this event, as I thought it was thoughtful of him to introduce to his mother a person who had presented her puja wares. But Prasad, who had known Deshmukh's reserved nature, was surprised at the call and promptly spread the news among his former colleagues before going back to his post in Washington.

On 5 November I went to the Finance Minister's house at Willingdon Crescent. His sister-in-law Kamalini and niece Usha were also there. After tea, we two took a walk in the garden. We

were talking about the draft of the First Five Year Plan. He then startled me by saying that he wanted to resign from the Planning Commission. I told him that he should not resign, as his presence would help the smooth running of the Commission's work. He said he was over-burdened with work and felt very tired, and asked me if I could help him. I said he could always count on my help whenever he wanted, still not knowing what was in his mind. And then he said: "You can fill my life." I was flabbergasted and asked for time for my answer.

Next day I telephoned his P.A., Sri Swaminathan, for an appointment with the Finance Minister.

I had considered his proposal in all its aspects. Though I had great admiration for him, a thought kept nagging me. When I met him that evening, I told him that I was almost a rustic; and he had the reputation of being the best-dressed man of India and had developed refined western manners. Could we be compatible? His answer was to take me to an eucalyptus tree and inscribe on its bark in Sanskrit a proposal of marriage, which I accepted.

Soon after, he went to London to attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference representing the Prime Minister.

After he returned in December, we went to Jawaharlal Nehru to break the news. He jumped in joy when we told him of our decision to get married. He said we would make an ideal couple. We wanted to keep the news secret yet, but he wanted to inform at least his daughter, Indu. She, too, was very happy.

Chintaman and I had thought that it would not look good for both of us to continue in the Planning Commission after our marriage. We were afraid that a husband-wife team in a body of only five or six members might bring the Prime Minister a bad name. So I offered to resign and carried with me the letter of my resignation to the Prime Minister when we went to announce the news to him. But he ridiculed the idea, saying that Chintaman had not appointed me to the Planning Commission.

Our wedding was fixed for 22 January 1953. Jawaharlal

Nehru was the first witness at the civil marriage which took place at five-thirty in the evening at 33 Prithviraj Road, where I had moved after joining the Planning Commission. Smt. Sucheta Kripalani and my brother Narayana Rao were the other witnesses. The function was also attended by Smt. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Smt. Krishna Hutheesing, and Smt. Indira Gandhi.

Chintaman had informed his family about the marriage only a couple of days earlier. He had telephoned to Usha, his niece, for whom he had great affection. Usha told him that they thought it was going to happen sooner or later! Kamalini, his sister-in-law, telephoned to congratulate him and sent a pair of bangles and black beads with *mangalsutra*, traditionally worn by every Hindu married woman. My mother was very happy at the news, although she had some worry whether our different backgrounds might not clash.

After marriage I shifted from Prithviraj Road to 1 Willingdon Crescent. We visited the President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, to seek his blessings. He presented us with a silver plate. Smt. Vijayalakshmi Pandit gave us a dozen silver glasses and Smt. Krishna Hutheesing a set of six silver and copper plates – a Tanjore speciality. Several other friends and well-wishers showered their affection on us with greetings and presents.

The marriage was widely hailed by the Press the next day. For nearly a week the newspapers and leading magazines carried the news with pictures.

We both had official engagements the next day – 23 January – in Bombay. The following day we left Bombay for Poona and stayed with Dr. G.V. Desai, Chintaman's friend.

From Poona I went on a tour of four districts – Sholapur, Ahmednagar, Bijapur, and Nanded – to organize famine relief work at the instance of the Prime Minister who had given a cheque for twenty-five thousand rupees for the purpose. Sri S.K. Patil, the Congress stalwart of Bombay, also gave me a cheque

for fifty thousand for the relief work. As I was a member of the Planning Commission with the status of a Minister of State, senior State officials accompanied me on the tour. During the tour I collected about seventy-five thousand rupees. Thus in all we were able to spend about one hundred fifty thousand rupees on relief work. I had a statement of accounts of the expenditure prepared and got it audited. Sri S.K. Patil told me later that he was pleasantly surprised to receive the accounts, as I was perhaps the first person to render the accounts so fast in such matters!

My husband returned from Poona to Delhi as he had to attend to work in connection with the preparation of the Union Budget for 1953-54. From Maharashtra I went to Hyderabad, where my husband joined me. We stayed for a few days with Leela and Madhava Rao Baji at No. 1, R.T.C. Workshop compound. My mother was with Leela at the time.

That was how we enjoyed our honeymoon – in famine relief work and Budget preparation!

When we returned to Delhi, we were given affectionate receptions by friends. The inimitable *Shankar's Weekly*, I remember, carried a cartoon showing me and my husband, some industrialists in front of him and some poor people in front of me; his hand in the pocket of the industrialists and mine, in turn, in his!

It is interesting to recall that while I was young I had developed some hostility towards Indian I.C.S. officers. They had come to acquire the reputation of putting down freedom fighters in the interest of their British masters. They were thought to be dragging their feet in the implementation of progressive legislation. My another aversion was their wives, who used to organize exclusive clubs away from the city and lived lives of their own, totally alien to Indian culture.

With these prejudices I had never imagined that one day I would come to fancy a member of the I.C.S. to the point of marrying him. But Chintaman is not of the usual run of the steel

frame of my imagination. He is not only humane and understanding but also a Sanskrit scholar, fully acquainted with the Vedas and the Upanishads and rooted in Indian culture.

V. As Members of the Planning Commission

CHINTAMAN AND I were able to make our contribution as members of the Planning Commission, severally, and sometimes jointly, to the promotion of socially useful activities in several fields.

My first contribution was of a negative character. Four days after my joining the Planning Commission, I received a file from the Ministry of External Affairs. I was shocked to find that about one hundred American families were coming to India for undertaking rural welfare work. The matter had already reached a stage when the visas were about to be issued. I was convinced that India did not need the services of foreigners to work in our villages. They were not qualified to undertake this as they neither knew much about India, nor did they speak the languages of our people. I therefore thought I should not allow this proposal to materialise. I put down my views on the file and sent it to the other members of the Commission for their comments. I got a reply from the Finance Minister the next day in which he said he agreed with me and that it was a mistake that the scheme was agreed to in such a simplistic manner. I was happy and proud that all the members of the Commission, including the Prime Minister, agreed with me. The proposal was thus dropped.

Coming to the positive side, I was able, as mentioned earlier, to secure the commitment of the Government of India for the

control of population growth and the concepts of family planning and the small family norm. Chintaman's help in this effort was immense, as the Health Minister, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, was against giving official recognition to the programme.

I was also able to get several important health subjects put on the official list, such as the campaigns against cancer, T.B., leprosy, and filaria. Although no provision could be made in the first plan for these campaigns, some assistance was provided to voluntary agencies engaged in this task.

Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, who was a pioneer of social welfare work in Madras and a builder of many welfare institutions, had started a Cancer Institute in Madras. This was the only institute of its kind in the South. She was my close friend, although much older. She once mentioned to me that she was not able to collect more than ten thousand rupees a year by organising charity cultural programmes and bringing out souvenirs with advertisements. She asked me if I could help in getting a government grant for the Institute. I mentioned this to Chintaman. We both then talked to the Health Minister, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who was in full agreement with us that the Institute deserved help but feared that there was no provision for this in the Health Ministry's budget. I suggested to her that she could sanction it from the discretionary fund of her ministry. But she thought that other plan projects might suffer. Then Chintaman, as Finance Minister, came to our rescue. He told the Health Minister that if she was short of that sum, he would make it up for her. We were thus able to help Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy in her efforts to strengthen the Institute, which has now come to be considered as one of the foremost Cancer Institutes not only in India but the world over.

Though filaria and leprosy were mentioned in the chapter on Health of the plan document, there was no specific budget for mounting programmes to control them. But as Chairman of the Central Social Welfare Board I was able to give grants to strengthen the efforts of voluntary agencies engaged in fighting

these diseases. Later came the national programmes for the control and eradication of communicable diseases.

In the list of priorities under Health, I was also able to include a provision for potable drinking water in rural areas, as well as sewage and night soil disposal in rural areas for environmental sanitation.

In the area of nursing there was at the time only one cadre of nurses, i.e. the general nurse, the minimum academic qualification for becoming one being matriculation. According to the reports available, there was an acute dearth of trained nurses in the villages, not to speak of doctors. I felt that it would be ideal to provide at least one trained nurse for a group of ten villages. The Health Minister, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, was closely concerned with this problem, and wanted to move a Bill in Parliament for the Auxiliary Nurse Mid-Wives Training Scheme. I canvassed support for the scheme. The Bill was eventually passed. But its implementation became difficult as most of the State Health Ministers thought that the new scheme would bring down the nursing standards: the minimum educational qualification for getting training as auxiliary nurse-midwife was to be only eighth standard. But Dr. B.C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal, who was an eminent doctor himself, was in favour of the scheme. I remember that when this matter came up for discussion in the Planning Commission, Prime Minister Nehru remarked: "What are the standards you are talking about when there are no services at all!" Chintaman and I agreed with the Prime Minister. Ultimately the training of the junior cadre of Auxiliary Nurse Mid-Wives (A.N.M.) got started. I helped a great deal in the implementation of the community development programme undertaken by the Government of India as a part of the First Five Year Plan.

Another important development was the establishment of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur saw the need for an all-India institute in the capital city to help and strengthen the research and training facilities for

the provision of health services. But many States were opposed to this idea as they wanted the proposed institute to be located in their own territory. The main opposition came from Dr. Sushila Nayyar, the Health Minister of Delhi State, who felt that Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi, which was coming up, would be anyway providing services on an all-India basis. The matter came up before the Planning Commission, where I pleaded the idea of starting the institute in Delhi. The proposal was carried through, and Finance Minister Deshmukh provided forty million rupees to the Health Ministry for the establishment of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. The Institute has by now achieved international reputation.

I was also connected with the National Small Savings Campaign as Chairman of the National Small Savings Committee. The idea underlying the scheme was to mobilise our own national resources and to make even the poorest man a partner in the endeavour for planned progress. People could deposit even their gold, which would go back to them with interest after the maturity period. One day I was surprised to find Prime Minister Nehru coming to me and handing over a few gold pieces in the shape of photo frames and watches. "Durgabai," he said, "you keep these for your savings campaign; this is my contribution." I was greatly helped in the savings campaign work by Smt. Achamma Matthai and Smt. Laxmi Mazumdar.

The Relief and Rehabilitation Committee had been formed following the partition of the country, with Lady Mountbatten as Chairman. When she was leaving India, the Prime Minister asked me to shoulder this responsibility. He also gave me a report on the working of the Committee, which showed a deficit of fifty thousand rupees. The President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, was President of the organisation.

I accepted the responsibility. I toured all the districts of Punjab, the worst affected State in the wake of partition, along with my husband and organised relief and rehabilitation camps.

By the time I left the Committee, it had not only wiped out its deficit but had acquired assets worth more than five lakhs. Nearly one thousand Muslim women brought from Pakistan to India and an equal number taken from India to Pakistan were all rehabilitated. I was greatly helped in this work by Mridula Sarabhai and Prema Thapar.

As Education was in my charge as Member (Social Services), I was responsible for the drawing up of a separate section on Women's Education in the chapter on Education in the First Five Year Plan. I had noticed that there were three major obstacles to the education of women:

1. The fact that girls had to leave their parental homes after marriage discouraged parents from educating their daughters. Knowing that they could not obtain any "returns" from investment in the education of their daughters, parents shied away from sending them to schools. They had to spend on their dowries in any case. That obligation was all that the parents were willing to bear.
2. Even where parents were indulgent enough to send their daughters to schools, girls tended to lapse into ignorance because they had little opportunity to utilise their learning in life.
3. Social and cultural prejudices against the schooling of girls inhibited their education even if they had relatively progressive parents.

These obstacles led to poor enrolment of girls at school and, what was equally sad, a heavy drop-out of those who were enrolled. I therefore advocated in the section on Women's Education the introduction of condensed courses of education for women. Its features were: first, the seven years' course was condensed into four years; second, the subjects offered were those which were likely to interest girls more, and likely to equip them more realistically for employment; third, students doing

the course were to be given a stipend throughout the period of their study.

This led to the starting of hundreds of condensed courses of education for women who had to stop their education for several reasons, e.g. when they became widows. Thousands of women had thereby been helped to attain the matriculation level of education.

Subsequently, when I was appointed in 1959 as Chairman of the National Committee on Girls' and Women's Education constituted by the Government of India, I had the opportunity of studying and making a comprehensive set of recommendations. These recommendations were accepted, among them being the establishment of a National Council for Women's Education. I was appointed the Council's first Chairman and held the office from 1960 to 1962 in addition to my duties as Chairman, Central Social Welfare Board. One of the recommendations I made as Chairman of the National Committee on Girls' and Women's Education was in regard to the quantum of grant to be made in aid of women's hostels attached to colleges and universities. Though in the case of boys' hostels the university and the college had to contribute 50 per cent as matching contribution, it was recommended that in the case of girls' hostels the matching contribution be fixed at only 25 per cent, the remaining 75 per cent coming from the University Grants Commission. This recommendation was accepted by the U.G.C. when Chintaman was its Chairman.

The special interests' of Chintaman, as member of the Planning Commission, were the improvement of administration for implementing the plans, and of the planning process itself.

Chintaman was responsible for the establishment of the Indian Institute of Public Administration in Delhi which has now come to be a major training centre for not only Indian administrators but also administrators from other developing countries. In consultation with the Ford Foundation, the Finance Minister had invited Paul Appleby, of the Syracuse

University in Buffalo, U.S.A., to study and report on Indian administration and administrative procedures. The proposal for setting up an Institute of Public Administration was one of the recommendations of Appleby. Chintaman was associated with the Indian Institute of Public Administration as Vice-President for several years.

He was also Chairman of the Court of Governors of the Administrative Staff College of India, in Hyderabad, for over thirteen years. Dr. John Matthai was the first Chairman, and when he was retiring due to ill health he suggested that Chintaman should succeed him. The Staff College has established itself as a reputed management training and consultancy establishment on the model of the one at Henly-on-Thames in the U.K.

Another institution whose growth was assisted by Chintaman is the Indian Statistical Institute. Its Director at the time was Dr. Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, an internationally-known statistical expert. Chintaman happened to meet Dr. Mahalanobis in Calcutta in the year 1920 after the latter's return from Cambridge, and their acquaintance ripened into close friendship. Though Chintaman was not a statistician, he understood and appreciated the need for such an institute in the context of planned development. Pandit Nehru, who was a contemporary of Dr. P.C. Mahalanobis in the U.K., also recognised the role that this Institution could play in national development. Chintaman was the President of the Institute from 1945 to 1964. After our marriage, Chintaman and I used to visit Calcutta both in our respective official capacities and as personal friends of Dr. Mahalanobis and his enlightened wife Nirmal Kumari Mahalanobis, whom I used to call "Rani Didi". Whenever we visited Calcutta in connection with conferences and seminars we invariably stayed with them in their charming house "Amrapali", which was redolent of the memories of the late poet Dr. Rabindranath Tagore. Professor Mahalanobis was for some time Private Secretary to the poet. The flowering

magnolia tree in the front lawns of our house “Rachana” in Hyderabad always reminds me of Rani Didi who had given us the plant.

A very important change was initiated within the Planning Commission by Chintaman as Finance Minister. Until then there was no procedure which required a member of the Commission to send an important file for information to the other members, or to let each member know what was happening on matters under his/her charge: whether ministries were implementing the projects on schedule, and whether they were spending the money as allocated. Once the Planning Commission decided and finalised the plans and made provisions for them, it was the responsibility of the concerned ministries to implement them. As per the procedure sponsored by Chintaman, it was obligatory for the concerned ministry to inform the Planning Commission of the progress and the Member in charge should satisfy himself that the planned targets were being fulfilled. This was the main reason for the present-day importance and status of the Planning Commission.

VI. Social Reform and Welfare Activity

AS SOON AS the Ministers of Health and Education came to know that, as Member of the Planning Commission, I had allotted forty million rupees for the Central Social Welfare Board for helping the voluntary social welfare organisations, both claimed that his ministry was the right one to implement the programme and, therefore, the allotment should be given to it.

In a note to the Commission, I made out a case that the Central Social Welfare Board should be an autonomous body and that the usual governmental procedures, derived as they were from the East India Company days, would not answer the needs of the situation. Also as assistance to the social welfare organisations had to be given expeditiously as many good institutions were in danger of closing down for want of financial aid, only an autonomous body could do it. The Commission accepted my proposal.

According to the procedure then in vogue, the unanimous decisions of the Planning Commission were to be accepted by the ministries; in the case of difference of opinion in the Commission, the matter had to go to the Cabinet for decision. In spite of the unanimous decision to set up an autonomous Central Social Welfare Board, the Health Minister insisted that the funds allotted to the Board should be administered by Health Ministry.

As it was originally my proposal, I thought that I should intervene and sent a note to the Prime Minister suggesting the reasons for constituting the Board as an autonomous body free from ministerial interference. I also stated that I would rather surrender the forty million rupees than allotting it to any particular ministry. I requested the Prime Minister to place the matter before the Cabinet. I sent a copy of the note to the Finance Minister. I came to know later that the Finance Minister had asked his Secretary to draw up a note to the Cabinet to the effect that, if necessary, the Finance Ministry would administer the funds allotted for the benefit of the voluntary organisations.

I received a letter from the Prime Minister acknowledging my note and saying that he was calling a special meeting of the Cabinet to have the matter discussed and that he would let me know its decision. After a week I was informed that the Cabinet had decided that the Board should be autonomous in its working and that neither the Ministry of Health nor the Ministry of Education would control it as they never claimed any allocation for assisting the voluntary social welfare organisations until this specific provision was made by the Planning Commission.

However, for reasons of answerability to Parliament, the Board was placed under the Ministry of Education. Pandit Nehru enquired of me whether this would meet my point. I thanked him for the decision, as, for all practical purposes, the Board would be an autonomous one.

After the First Five Year Plan was drawn up towards the close of 1952, I had been wanting to resign from the Planning Commission in order to devote my time to the implementation of the several schemes which I was responsible for sponsoring. But Nehru asked me to work as full-time Chairman of the Central Social Welfare Board. This was in 1954. As I had already been working as its honorary Chairman since its inception on 14 August 1953, I accepted Panditji's suggestion.

The Prime Minister did me another honour. As member of the Planning Commission, I was a member of the National

Development Council, which included the Cabinet Ministers, the members of the Planning Commission and the Chief Ministers. Even after I had ceased to be member of the Planning Commission, the Prime Minister asked me, as Chairman of the Central Social Welfare Board, to continue on the Council. Panditji also asked Maulana Azad, the Education Minister, to give me the status of Minister of State in my new capacity. I worked as full-time Chairman of the Central Social Welfare Board for more than eight years till 1962.

For a proper appreciation of the formation of the Central Social Welfare Board it is necessary to know the historical background of "social reform" and "social work" in India and the distinction between the two.

To draw a distinction between the two is not easy. Social reform aims essentially at change, a change that may sometimes involve the basic values and the social institutions in the community; while social work relates primarily to welfare activities undertaken within the limits set by existing values. Social reform aims at changing the pattern of life of the whole community, while social work aims at meeting the needs of individuals and groups within the existing pattern.

Both social reform and welfare work are exemplified in my own life's work. Much of what is today recognised as social work has crystallised out of the vigorous activity of reformers of the nineteenth century and the early part of this century. Then again, all work relating to the betterment of the traditionally under-privileged members of society involves a change of values in that society. Fighting for the equality of rights of women, pleading for a better deal for Harijans, and launching a movement for a change in the manner of handling juvenile delinquents are activities that can be placed under social reform. Running an institution for rescued women, organisation of community services in a Harijan colony, provision of shelter and education for neglected and delinquent children are instances of social work. Ordinarily, the two activities call for different types

of leadership and personnel. Social reform is the natural field of the volunteer, and social work is increasingly entrusted to the professional worker.

Service of the needy is a part of a long tradition in India. As in other family-centred societies, the care of the needy was built into the structure of social institutions. Religion emphasised the values of charity, philanthropy, and mutual help. The giving of alms, the feeding and the care of destitutes were considered acts of religious merit. The temples gave shelter to the homeless. Social institutions also provided mechanisms to meet the needs of the old, the sick, and other helpless sections of the community. The joint family provided for the care of aged members and for the physically handicapped, the chronically ailing, and the mentally deficient. Caste and community councils were often responsible for individuals in need of help. The economic system itself was governed by social customs and the feudal employers did care for their employees though in a paternalistic way. However, these social mechanisms and their customary sanctions could only be effective in a small rural community with intimate face-to-face contacts.

With the advent of British rule, the Indian social scene saw the rise of three distinct forces that acted and reacted on each other, viz., Christian missionary endeavour, the reaction thereto of the Indian religious and social structure, and the impact of the educational and economic systems introduced by the English.

The impact of new ideas began in 1780 with the establishment of the Serampore Mission in Bengal. To their evangelical efforts, the missionaries brought the conviction that many religious and social reforms were necessary in the Hindu social structure, especially with regard to child marriage, polygamy, female infanticide, *sati*, and forbidding of widow remarriage. They made a frontal attack on the caste system and tried to highlight the innate equality taught in Christianity. Most of the early social welfare institutions were established by Christian missionaries and it was only in later years that the initiative in

the welfare field was taken by other missionary organisations, by individual philanthropists, and, lastly, by the state.

It was inevitable that the work of the Christian missionaries would arouse a measure of defensive reaction. The first person whose life and work are of interest in such a survey is Raja Ram Mohun Roy. As a religious reformer, educationist, and social worker, he was the symbol of the effort of the Indian mind to face the challenge of transition and to arrive at a synthesis of the currents and cross-currents in Indian thought and ways of life. Through his journals, he analysed the effects of British economic policy upon the Indian rural economy. In an effort to strengthen Hinduism against the criticism of Christian missionaries, he advocated a return to the purity of thought contained in the Vedas and the Upanishads. As a social reformer, he pleaded for the abolition of caste distinctions and of the practice of *sati*. Founder of the Brahmo Samaj, he also established many institutions of modern education.

The religious and social reforms that he initiated set the pattern for similar activities in other parts of the country for nearly half-a-century. In Bengal, he was followed by Dwarkanath Tagore, Devendranath Tagore, and Keshab Chandra Sen. The Brahmo Samaj entered into the fields of famine relief, education for girls, emancipation of women, and the movement for encouraging temperance and charity. In western India – particularly Bombay and Maharastra – social life was influenced by similar religious and social reform movements. In 1849, the Paramhansa Sabha was organised in Maharastra to fight for caste reform. In 1861, Justice M.G. Ranade helped to set up the Widow Marriage Association and in 1870 he helped to found the Sarvajanic Sabha. In 1882, Pandita Ramabai, an Indian Christian missionary, established the Arya Mahila Samaj. Jyotiba Phule, a social worker and a campaigner for caste reform, organised several social work institutions, orphanages, and schools for girls. In Bombay, Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar and Justice Ranade established the Prarthana Samaj, on the lines of

the Brahmo Samaj. At about the same time, similar ideas on social reform were popularised by the Muslim reformer, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. In 1875, he founded an educational institution which developed into the Aligarh Muslim University of today. His philosophy, influenced by western liberal and democratic traditions, aroused a measure of orthodox opposition.

These leaders of public opinion were persons influenced by western thought who, at the same time, were conscious of the challenge this thought constituted to the existing religious and social customs. Their attempt was to show that Hinduism and Islam, in their pure form, did not suffer from any blemishes. All that was required was to shed the extraneous "impurities" acquired with time. In this light, social reform was partially in the nature of a defensive reaction against the onslaughts of alien religion and culture. This defence took different forms. Apart from the effort at reviving the Indian religious and social structure in its original healthy condition, a parallel effort was directed towards putting up institutions that might provide an alternative to the welfare services provided by Christian missionaries.

The Brahmo Samaj was characterised by reform measures such as the abolition of image worship and emphasis on reason. Its members attempted to organise their lives on a rational basis, discarding all superstitious practices. The Arya Samaj, founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, while giving up image worship and sub-castes did not assimilate rationalism as a way of life. Its militant activities were directed towards counteracting the proselytising work of Christian missionaries; it rendered great service in the field of education in northern India. The Ramakrishna Mission was named after the sage who inspired Swami Vivekananda. Founded by the latter in 1897, its organisational pattern was modelled on the lines of Christian missions. To a much greater extent than in the Brahmo Samaj or the Arya Samaj, service was a major function of the

Ramakrishna Mission.

The British educator in his turn introduced a new pattern of thinking based on rationalism, democracy, and liberalism. While the work of the missionaries aroused a defensive reaction, the rationalistic way of thinking, linked with modern science, had a great appeal to the Indian intellectual. The conventions and norms of the joint family and the inequities of the caste system could no longer be reconciled with the individualistic and liberal ways of thinking adopted by the newly educated middle class.

Equally significant changes were effected in the economic life of the country. The self-sufficient rural economy was gradually disturbed and villagers began to migrate in increasing numbers to the new industrial towns. The trend towards urbanisation weakened the customary obligations and, instead, gave rise to contractual relations and to the attendant problems of destitution, drinking, exploitation of women and children, slums, etc. However, the same trend also served to strengthen the democratic and liberal traditions and to heighten the awareness of the need for education and equality of rights for women.

These new ideas took firm shape among a school of thought based on secular-liberal traditions. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century emerged a band of social reformers working in different parts of the country. They included Bhandarkar, Kolkatkar, C.Y. Chintamani, S. Subramanya Iyer, K. Veeresalingam Pantulu, Narendra Nath Sen, Lala Baij Nath, and Ram Kali Chaudhari. They based their views not on the sastras but on intellectual conviction. Though they did not form themselves into any standing body, they met between the years 1880 and 1900 in fourteen "Social Conferences". They, too, were men of faith and belief, but their faith was based on the substratum of reason.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the rationalistic-humanistic tradition came to be established as an independent force. In Maharastra, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar sacrificed popularity and goodwill in his efforts to establish reason, and

not religious sentiments as the motive force for social reform. Although he did not gain an immediate following, his life and writings left a lasting impress on social thinkers and workers of succeeding generations. Agarkar was followed by Gopal Krishna Gokhale. The latter, though a rationalist, was a believer. As a moderate liberal, he broke away from his radical political colleague, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, in order to concentrate on social reform. In 1905, he founded the Servants of India Society. This was the first secular organisation dedicated to social service. It counted among its life-members G.K. Deodhar, N.M. Joshi, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, and Pandit H.N. Kunzru. Gokhale and his colleagues began the tradition of establishing facts as the first step in mobilising public opinion in favour of social reform. Each campaign was based on a closely argued case built up on an objective collection of facts.

Such a strongly intellectual tradition could not expect to gain a mass appeal. Its plea for reform reached only the newspaper-reading intelligentsia and not illiterate masses whose pattern of life it sought to reform. Another reason that prevented the Servants of India Society and similar social work organisations from becoming major movements was the preoccupation of the people and their leaders with the growing nationalist movement. The breach between Gokhale and Tilak was significant. The educated middle class gave their support to Tilak in his fight for political independence rather than to the social reformer, whose appeal in the context was inevitably feeble.

The appearance of Gandhiji on the Indian public scene in 1920 provided a bridge between the social reformers and the political rebels. He was not only aware of the more immediate political and economic problems but also sensitive to the subtler social and psychological crises through which the country was passing. His "constructive programme" was a movement both for economic betterment and for improving the tenor of social life. To stress the common duties of men and women, and not equal rights of women alone, was characteristic of his approach

to social reforms. So also he did not teach in terms of the rights of Harijans but of the duties of the higher castes towards them. He believed that whereas emphasis on rights divides, emphasis on duties unites. His special contribution in the organisational field was to set up appropriate national organisations with dedicated personnel to solve specific problems, e.g. the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the All-India Village Industries Association, and the Nai Talim Sangh (basic education movement).

Besides founding and supporting institutions, Gandhiji inspired a large number of local social reform activities. The first half of the twentieth century, when he lived and worked amongst us, marks a great epoch in the social reform movement in India. The real secret of his influence lay in his appeal to the heart rather than to the mind. This was a break with the intellectual tradition set by the social reformers of the early twentieth century.

The organisation of training programmes for welfare workers has served, however, to maintain the intellectual tradition of social work. The first attempt in this direction was made by the Social Service League, Bombay, in the nineteen-twenties. The League organised a short orientation course for volunteer workers, but with no intention of training them to take up paid position. A major departure from the tradition that identified social work with voluntary activity was the establishment in 1936 of the Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work as the professional training institution.

But the professional social worker, however well equipped, cannot fill the role played by the lay volunteer. Unlike Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Gokhale, and Gandhiji, the professional workers cannot be expected to serve as pioneers and crusaders of social reform. They are humbler persons equipped with certain knowledge and skills to handle specific problems of institutional management and of inter-personal and inter-group relations. At worst, they are persons doing a job only to earn a living; at best, they are persons with a sense of social purpose and pride in the

profession to which they belong. It would be wrong to presume that training is necessarily antithetical to the fervour and drive that come from emotional conviction. With training, a zealous worker can become more effective; with zeal, a trained worker can acquire direction and purpose. Today the professional social workers are a young and small group in the country. But they are a growing group. While the standards and types of training are still being evolved, and idea of professional training in social work has come to stay.

Let me turn now to the role of the state. The state has a specific role to play in the field of welfare. State action can be either restricted to the enactment of social legislation or extended in a more positive manner to the provision of services for the welfare of individuals and under-privileged groups. In India the Constitution, in the chapter on Directive Principles, places on the state a wide range of obligations in the sphere of social welfare. This is what has led to the establishment of Social Welfare Advisory Boards in the States in addition to the Central Board of Social Welfare at the Centre.

The Five Year Plans draw a distinction between the minimum "social services" provided by the state for the entire community and "social welfare" services intended for individuals and groups in need of special attention. On this basis, health and education come under the category of minimum services. These services have still to be extended to the entire population, and voluntary agencies try to supplement governmental effort in the fields of health and education.

The Ministry of Rehabilitation was set up in the wake of the partition of the country to cope with the problems of the physical, social, and economic rehabilitation of displaced persons. The programme was mainly directed towards economic rehabilitation and housing. The process has been completed in respect of refugees from West Pakistan. The problem of refugees from East Pakistan proved to be continuous and complex.

The responsibility for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and

Tribes has been assigned to the Ministry of Home Affairs at the Centre. Under a separate Article of the Constitution, the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is required to report to the President on the progress registered in the welfare of these special groups.

Until the creation of a Department of Social Welfare which has subsequently become a full-fledged Ministry, the Ministry of Home Affairs was also entrusted with responsibility for subjects such as correctional administration, vagrancy, juvenile delinquency, suppression of immoral traffic in women, and programmes of after-care and moral and social hygiene.

The Ministry of Community Development and subsequently the Department of Rural Development have been entrusted with the intensive and comprehensive development of economic and social aspects of life in rural areas.

Following the establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board in August 1953 to administer the programme of grants-in-aid to existing voluntary welfare organisations and to sponsor and assist the development of new welfare services through non-official organisations, the State governments, at the instance of the Board, set up Social Welfare Advisory Boards. Project Implementing Committees provided the standing machinery at the district level for the planning and execution of welfare extension projects in rural areas.

The significance of the establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board lies in the fact that it brought voluntary effort on the official map of India. Though there were nearly twelve thousand organisations, spread all over the country and manned by devoted social workers, they depended mainly on charity and public donations for their maintenance. Every flood, every earthquake, every famine, and every war left thousands of destitutes, deserted widows, orphans, blind, deaf and dumb, and delinquents. So long as the state was a "Police State" it was concerned mainly with the law and order situation and did not concern itself with the welfare of the people. Patriotic and

devoted men and women came forward to organise relief for the unfortunate. Some of the Princes and charitable trusts helped these organisations but they had no steady and reliable sources of funding. After India became independent in 1947, the princely states were integrated with the result that this source of financial assistance dried up. The system of zamindari was abolished and this, too, had its impact on charitable organisations. Many of them were on the verge of closing down.

It was at this time that I joined the Planning Commission. The first thing that I did was to study the conditions of the existing institutions, the sources of their funds, and the problems they confronted. I represented to Prime Minister Nehru and Finance Minister Deshmukh that there was no use talking about the need for bringing up the weaker sections of society and giving better status to women unless we had a budgetary provision to help them and to save the institutions working for their welfare from being closed down. My plea was accepted by the Planning Commission.

When the Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust was established in 1944 I had been placed in charge of collecting funds and organising the Trust's work among rural women in Andhra. Later I was appointed a Trustee. The Kasturba Memorial Centres were among the few voluntary institutions that functioned in the late forties in rural areas. Our rural women, though illiterate and backward and custom-ridden, are very intelligent and active. They work along with their menfolk in agricultural operations from the state of preparing the land and sowing seeds to harvesting the crop and storing it in godowns. They also take care of the cows and buffaloes and help in the production of milk. Besides, they tend kitchen gardens and transport the produce to urban areas to supplement the income of their families. In spite of their illiteracy, they act as equal partners with their husbands.

I therefore took special interest, as Chairman of the Central Social Welfare Board, in promoting welfare work among rural women. Steps were taken to establish thirty thousand rural

welfare centres covering one-and-a-half lakh villages with one centre for five villages. A Grama Sevika (village woman welfare worker) was posted in each centre, as also a Craft Teacher and an Auxiliary Nurse Midwife. The scheme became so popular that many donors came forward offering buildings and land. An important pay-off of the scheme was that it increased the employment and education opportunities for women. As Mukhya Sevikas, Midwives, and Craft Teachers were needed for the scheme, women came forward to equip themselves through education and training for this work. The scheme also helped to improve the liaison between voluntary bodies and the government in matters of social welfare. This came about through the institution of committees established to evaluate implementation.

These centres were spread all over the country from the Himalayas to Cape Comirin. One of the purposes of the constant touring undertaken by me and Chintaman in later years was to see how these Centres were working. A great change could be observed among rural women within two years. At one centre, we found that even women of ninety years were coming to learn to read and write. I asked one of them why at her age she was keen to learn. Her reply was that she wanted to read the *Granth Saheb* by herself. This was in Punjab. Another woman of the same age replied that she wanted to read the *Ramayana* herself.

Another effect of the Centre was that educated boys began to marry rural girls as they found them able to read and to work on sewing machines.

A young married girl told me that she could now read the letters from her husband, which earlier she had had to get read out for her by the village accountant. She felt very shy to have had to do that. Now she was happy that she could write to her husband and read his letters.

Another scheme launched by me under the aegis of the Board was for the economic development of families. I realised that it was necessary to ensure that each family was economically

stable: a poor family of ten or twelve could not be supported by one or two earners. If housewives could supplement family income, I felt, it would be possible to improve substantially the economic position of the family. Accordingly, the scheme sought to provide housewives with part-time or "own-time" work. Efforts were made to involve industries such as the beedi and the match box industries in the scheme, and to organise industrial cooperatives for the sale of products.

I attached great importance to the reform of jails and the rehabilitation of criminals. Society, by refusing to take them back into respectable life, condemns criminals and prostitutes to continue in the evil life into which they have fallen. I, therefore, requested Dr. M.S. Gore, who was then Director of the Delhi School of Social Work, to examine the conditions of criminals and the problems of their rehabilitation. A committee was set up under his chairmanship for the purpose. Lady Dhanvanthi Rama Rao undertook to study the living conditions, needs, and problems of prostitutes. I was extremely happy as I saw the progress of their work. I was particularly appreciative of Dr. Gore's sensitive and analytical insights, and would read out bits from his report to my husband. Much of what is being done today by the Central and the State governments for the rehabilitation of criminals is the outcome of Dr. Gore's report.

Among the publications of the Board, two to which I look back with special satisfaction were the first attempts of their kind: one was a compendious review entitled *Social Welfare in India* and the other dealt with *Social Legislation and Its Effects on Social Reform and Social Work*. I also initiated the publication of the *Social Welfare* and its Hindi counterpart the *Samaj Kalyan* as monthly journals of the Board.

I had a very interesting time during my chairmanship of the Central Social Welfare Board, which sometimes entailed clashes of opinion and personalities.

Under the procedure for the Local Works scheme which had a provision of one hundred and fifty million rupees, the Planning

Commission entrusted to the Member in-charge the responsibility of sanctioning ten thousand rupees to each local voluntary organisation subject to its receiving a matching contribution for that particular work from the State government. The latter had also to recommend that the organisation was a suitable one. Once the Poddar College of Commerce in Bombay wanted to take some students to nearby suburban villages for work on building a couple of link roads, cleaning of tanks, etc. Its Principal, Professor Welinkar, came along with fifty students requesting a grant of ten thousand rupees for the purpose. I had to do some hard work before I could convince Sri Morarji Desai, then Chief Minister of Bombay, that the institution was a good one and could be given the grant.

On another occasion, Sri Desai refused to give a matching contribution of fifteen thousand rupees to the State Social Welfare Advisory Board when it was to be set up in Bombay State. Smt. Achamma Matthai had been appointed Chairman on my recommendation. Prime Minister Nehru resolved the dispute and succeeded in establishing a procedure by which the Bombay government and the Central Social Welfare Board would each give fifteen thousand rupees to the State Social Welfare Advisory Board annually. Similar confrontations arose with the Chief Ministers of Punjab and Karnataka. Ultimately we succeeded in establishing State Social Welfare Advisory Boards in all the States.

When the Silver Jubilee of the Central Social Welfare Board came round in 1978, the Board honoured me by arranging the celebrations in Hyderabad since my husband and I could not go to Delhi due to health reasons. About seven hundred delegates came from all over the country. Smt. Leela Moolgaokar, who was the Chairman, presented on that occasion a "Mini Hospital on Wheels" and also a demand draft for three lakh rupees to equip the van. It had been my dream for a long time to take medicare to the doorsteps of the rural folk. It was therefore thoughtful and gracious of Sri Moolgaokar of Telco to give the

van as a gift. The Government of Andhra Pradesh was good enough to provide an annual grant of seventy-five thousand rupees to meet the recurring expenditure on the running of the van. It is doing excellent work.

VII. Our Life Together

CHINTAMAN'S FIRST WIFE was Rosina, an English lady, whom he married in 1920 in London after he passed I.C.S. examination. He was then 24. Rosina, I understand, was a very fine person, kind, affectionate, very hospitable, and devoted to her husband. Besides, she was a gifted cook. After his tenure as the Governor of Reserve Bank was over in 1948. Chintaman was planning to go to England and settle down there. He bought a house in a suburb of London, and named it 'Roha', after his ancestral village. However, Prime Minister Nehru wanted him to continue in the post as he wanted Chintaman to look after the nationalisation of the Reserve Bank. Thus Chintaman could not go to England that year. Rosina died in London in 1949 after a brief illness. This was sudden, and Chintaman could not be with her at the time of her death.

They had a daughter – Primrose, whom they affectionately called 'Kiki'. She was born in the year 1922 at Amravati when Chintaman was serving the Central Provinces government. After Rosina's death, Chintaman had again entertained plans of going to England and staying with his daughter. But his plans changed when he thought of marrying me. He put away a part of his commuted pension in a London bank to provide a monthly allowance for Kiki.

At the time of our marriage, Chintaman was building a house in Poona at an estimated cost of one lakh rupees including twenty thousand as cost of the site. He had planned to build

only one floor but when our marriage was decided on he asked the architect to provide for a second floor which meant an increase of about thirty thousand rupees in cost. Chintaman told me that he was meeting this expenditure from his provident fund. Of the balance, he proposed to spend twenty thousand on his campaign for election to the Lok Sabha from the Colaba constituency. He further said that as he was not a Congress man, he did not want the Congress to spend any money on his election. He contested and won the election as an Independent, but was supported by the Congress.

The plot of land for the Poona house was costly, Chintaman said, but he had selected that site because it was just opposite the confluence of the two rivers Mula and Mutha, and in front of the Simhagad and the temple of Parvathi. I could quite understand; Chintaman was not merely an able administrator but was also an artist, a poet, and a lover of nature.

By the time we married, the house in Poona was almost ready for occupation. We performed the 'house-warming' ceremony when we visited Poona that summer. We invited a few relations and friends on the occasion. Sri B.D. Deshmukh, my husband's fourth brother who was in Poona, and his wife Sarlabai, helped us in making the arrangements. My brother Narayana Rao came from Madras to attend the function. A noted Marathi singer, Smt. Hirabai Barodekar, gave a music recital in the evening.

My husband wanted to name the house 'Ryvataka', meaning a small mountain, a variation of my original name 'Revathi', as I was born under the star of that name. However, I told him that since both of us were members of the Planning Commission the house could more aptly be named 'Yojana' which is the Sanskrit word for planning. He readily agreed and thus our Poona house was named 'Yojana'.

As we lived most of the time in Delhi, we did not want the house kept vacant and wanted somebody to look after it. We therefore decided to rent a part of the house, keeping a compact portion for our use whenever we went to Poona on a holiday.

The house was rented out to the Indian Air Force and the first tenant was the son-in-law of Col. Lakshmanan, the Director-General of Health Services. Our portion consisted of a drawing room, a bedroom, a kitchen with a small store room, and a garage. We purchased the furniture, and the necessary things for cooking. A small modern kitchen was set up with the help of an engineer friend.

The beauty of the house was that, sitting in the varandah, one could watch the beautiful spectacle of the two rivers in confluence. The garden which my husband developed there was more a botanical museum. It had rare varieties of creepers and shrubs, such as *Kaniyomarpha Microphylla*, and the tree of life, *Lignum Vitae*. We secured many varieties of plants from Lalbaug in Bangalore and appointed a *mali* who knew well his job of gardening. A number of students of botany and other students from the Poona colleges used to visit 'Yojana' to see the garden.

From Poona we used to go for a couple of weeks to Madras, where my mother and brother lived, and then return to Delhi. This was how we used to spend our summers.

In Delhi, 1 Willingdon Crescent was our residence. It had been allotted to Chintaman. It was a huge house, with five bedrooms. It would take me several minutes to *walk* from our bedroom to the kitchen. The house had seventeen servants' quarters and there were nine *malis* at work. It was built on a land of nearly five acres. The garden was beautiful. It had about three hundred and fifty eucalyptus trees and two big mango trees. It was difficult to grow either flowering trees or fruit trees, not to speak of flowering shrubs, because they would not flourish under the eucalyptus trees. Therefore, as soon as I went to 1 Willingdon Crescent to live with my husband, I suggested that some of the eucalyptus trees be cut down. The eucalyptus trees consumed all the available groundwater; and as their roots were not deep enough, there was the danger of the trees crashing down in a dust-storm, common enough in Delhi, or in a squall. (I had read

a newspaper report that the wife of a government officer had been killed when an eucalyptus tree fell on her during a squall.) Besides, bees had built many honey-combs on these trees and there was the danger of being stung by them.

Chintaman agreed with me and the *malis* cleared the garden. We set apart one acre of the land for growing wheat. Half-an-acre we used for growing pulses. Another half-an-acre we put under seasonal flowers. Some area was earmarked for vegetables. I do not remember having even bought our daily vegetables and mangoes while we lived in that house.

The *malis* said that we had grown the best wheat crop. I suggested to my husband that we set up a cooperative society consisting of the two of us and all the *malis* as members; we would put up the working capital and the *malis* would contribute their share through labour during their off-time. Whatever we grew would be shared equally by all of us. This idea was liked by the *malis* and I used to see them working even in the nights. Four of them lived in the servants' quarters.

Alongside the wheat, we planted varieties of fruit trees from the different States of India. We had 'Banganapalli' and 'Rasam', special varieties of mango from the Krishna district of Andhra, 'Langra' and 'Dussehri' from Uttar Pradesh, and some nice varieties from Saurashtra. We also grew varieties of oranges and lime. We had about thirty each of mango and orange and lime trees, which formed a pretty avenue leading to the wheat field.

We also had a beautiful lily pond and a rockery. One day while walking in the garden we thought we should have a penthouse near the lily pond. The government rules did not provide for constructing a penthouse. Therefore, we decided that we should have it constructed on our own; it cost us five thousand rupees, and it was worth it. We also wanted to have a pergola of about three hundred by fifteen feet, where we could grow flowering creepers, jasmines, Malathi, Radhamadhav, etc. Again, the government rules did not have a provision for a

pergola, even in a minister's house. Chintaman and I then asked the public works department to consider whether the money provided for repairs or additions in the budget could be spent on making a pergola, since we did not want any repairs to the house that year. After examining the rules, the department said that it could be done. Thus we came to have a beautiful pergola, with rods made of iron but painted to look as bamboos. Our visitors who saw the pergola were charmed by it.

Immediately after I shifted to the house I had a Tulsi Brindavan constructed. It was painted in brick-red colour with *haldi* and *kumkum* on the top. We planted Krishna Tulsi in the centre. This added to the beauty of the garden. On either side of the Tulsi we planted beautiful flowering trees and shrubs.

When I moved to I Willingdon Crescent, a large number of friends and relations of my husband were staying with him. There was N.R. Pillai, Cabinet Secretary, who occupied one bedroom. P.S. Rau, I.C.S. (Retd.), used another room. One room was reserved for justice Rajadhyaksha, a friend of Chintaman, who used to visit Delhi off and on; he was practically a-member of the family. Chintaman's niece Usha and Padmakar Prabhu, who were married a couple of years earlier, lived in one room. One thing which I did not like was their assembling together in the evenings with Chintaman at drink parties. I gradually put a stop to this. Within one year of our marriage they all left.

Before we were married, my husband had a butler to attend to his daily chores such as polishing the shoes, etc. He was well paid. I also found two cooks, who not only wasted the provisions but also carried home food for their families. The kitchen was in a mess, and nobody had the responsibility of controlling the household expenditure which was running very high, at about three thousand rupees per month.

After our marriage, though I had a good cook – Gopal, who had been in my service for several years – I never left the entire cooking to him. I was not satisfied unless I myself prepared at

least one dish. I am sure my husband liked this. Among the dishes he enjoyed most were Idli, Upma, and Dosa. But I did not provide only South Indian dishes. I also started to prepare Maharashtrian specialities: Ampti, Ambatvaran, Peethala, Chakli, Chivda, Puran Poli, and Panchamrit. My husband certified that I had learnt to make them well.

I found to my pleasant surprise that our monthly household expenditure had come down to about seventeen hundred rupees. There was no theft of provisions or milk now, nor any wastage. There was proper accounting of the money spent on running the household.

I should say that I became a traditional Hindu wife to Chintaman, sharing his comforts and happiness, as well as his problems and worries. My husband told me that I had proved myself to him as a wife who was

*Karyeshu Dasi, Karneshu Mantri,
Bhojyeshu Mata, Kshamaya Dharitri.*

Our cook Gopal stayed in one of the servants' quarters and his services were available the whole day. However, since he could not cook non-vegetarian dishes, I arranged for part-time help for preparing some non-vegetarian food for my husband, at least for dinner. After some time, my husband asked me to stop this arrangement. He said my vegetarian meals – sambhar, rasam, vegetables, kadhi, raita and the like were delicious and a non-vegetarian supplement was not really necessary. It was not as if I forced him to give up non-vegetarian food, and there was no question of adjustment or compromise. It just happened that even in our food habits we became one.

One day Prime Minister Nehru dropped in at breakfast time. It was Chintaman's birthday. Pandit Nehru said, 'Durgabai, you did not care to invite me to your house although it is the birthday of your husband. Do you know that he is my Minister?' I told him, 'Panditji, we do not like our birthdays being celebrated publicly; we want to spend the day quietly. But

we are very happy that you came to bless us!’ I offered him tea and biscuits.

My husband then took him to the garden. It was the first time that Panditji went round the garden and took in the details. He was astonished.

I made it a point to invite all my husband’s relations – his mother, brothers and their wives, sisters and their husbands – to live with us at least for one week and give them company. Over a period they all came and I have the satisfaction of knowing every one of them intimately.

Once I said to my husband’s mother, ‘Ayi, you should stay with us hereafter, because my husband is your eldest son.’ She said, ‘Yes’, and stayed with us. After some months one day she told me, ‘What do I do here? Both of you go to the office in the morning and return in the evening. I would like to go back to Roha.’ So we sent her back to the ancestral village, but we used to spend a couple of weeks with her every year.

My mother, brother, and his wife also used to pay us a visit occasionally, particularly during their children’s vacation. We thus had the pleasure of inviting our relations and they saw us living happily and spending a purposeful life.

Most of the members of Parliament and ministers had a complaint against me that we did not invite them for dinner or lunch, or at least for tea, on the occasion of our marriage. I therefore started to invite them for tea in batches of fifty. This went on for several months till most of them had visited us.

The Finance Minister had two night security guards. Yet we had the experience of thefts taking place twice in our house. It was strange. I was told that this had happened also when Sri K.P.S. Menon was living in the house earlier. It was difficult for us to have privacy because the security people used to peep even into the bedroom as part of their duty; I did not understand how, despite this, thieves managed to get into the house and take away a table clock, a transistor radio, and a silver flower vase.

Chintaman and I were very early risers, even though

occasionally we went to bed as late as midnight. We both had the habit of working for a couple of hours in the morning before eight. My husband would not have his bed tea as early as five o'clock. I have, even today not got into the habit of having early morning tea.

After eight we would have our wash and spend half-an-hour from half past eight to nine in the garden. At quarter past nine we would have our breakfast together. Chintaman used to reach his office exactly at half past nine.

Chintaman would not receive any visitors at home. This was a sharp departure from the practice followed by Congress ministers. When you went to the house of a Congress minister, you could see fifty to one hundred persons waiting to see him. Chintaman was not a typical Congress man; he was more a bureaucrat-cum-technocrat. Govind Ballabh Pant came to our house one morning, and, finding no cars in the porch, expressed his surprise.

Women social workers used to call on me at my house. I would receive them and spend some time with them from half past nine to ten in the morning. I used to leave for my office at quarter past ten to be there at half past ten.

Both Chintaman and I used to come home at one o'clock for lunch. Occasionally when he did not have a car, he used to cycle down to the house. After lunch at half past one and having listened to music for a while, we would rest for about an hour. Thereafter we would go to our offices at three in the afternoon. We would return at half past five unless we had meetings or some other urgent work. We made it a point not to have visitors between half past five and seven in the evening. After some snacks and evening tea, we would go either to a public garden or to the river-side. In this outing for fresh air and relaxation, only our driver would be with us. A liveried peon used to sit in the car, as was the practice with ministers, but we discontinued this as we did with many other things of this nature. We also would not fly the national flag on our car when we went out on

personal work.

We would return at quarter past seven and meet any special visitors till half past eight. After dinner at nine we would spend half-an-hour going through any important papers left by our personal secretaries. We go to bed at ten.

It was surprising for me to watch my husband, who was steeped in Western habits, recite slokas and poetry from the Vedas, the epics or the great Sanskrit poets. Jaidev and Kalidas are among his favourite authors. *Meghadoot*, translated by him into Marathi from Kalidas's *Megha Sandesh*, was very well received and even today we get occasional requests for copies of this volume.

We had some very efficient and devoted assistants. Among them Sri P.D. Kasbekar, an I.A.S. officer, was Chintaman's private secretary. They had great admiration for us and helped me in the discharge of my responsibilities both as housewife and as social worker. Kasbekar used to dispose of most of the papers himself, and brought only important papers for the Finance Minister's attention. I used to tell my husband that in Kasbekar's vocabulary there was no phrase like "Madam, this cannot be done." It was always, "Madam, it is done."

Kasbekar's only drawback, if at all, was that he did not know the names of plants. Since his boss was an expert, Kasbekar was afraid of taking down orders for varieties of seeds or plants from India and from foreign countries.

My private secretary was Elizabeth Azariah, whose husband was an Income-Tax Officer in the South. She was my classmate in the Law College during 1939-40. She was the mother of four children, and so found it difficult to complete her study of law. She stayed with us in two of the servants' quarters. Mrs. Azariah has since died but all her four sons are now well settled, two of them abroad. I remember that my husband used to give a piece of work to one of her sons, who was only ten at the time. He gave him one rupee for every frog he killed in the lily pond!

I used to prepare a variety of mango and lime pickles and

store them in jars, and send them to my husband's sisters and brothers. These were novelties for them, but were very common in Andhra. Chintaman himself became very fond of mango pickles.

We used to go to Madras in summer to spend a few weeks with my mother, brother, and his family. Occasionally, we spent some time in hill stations in the South like Kodaikanal and Ooty, along with my brother's three children – Ramu, Krishna, and Durgi. There were some occasions when we spent a short holiday in Kanyakumari, and in Roha with Chintaman's mother and other members of his family.

Chintaman generally maintained very good health. He had active habits and observed regular hours for work, food, and leisure. It was perhaps because of this disciplined life that even at the age of 82, he had been able to withstand the greatest pressure: three major operations and two minor ones from 22 to 30 August 1977. In the opinion of the doctors that attended on him, it was because he maintained his general health and his vital functions were normal that he was able to survive the major illness.

When I look back over the twenty-six years of our married life, I cannot find even a single instance where we differed significantly. Thus, there was no question of adjustment because adjustment and compromise arise only when one differs basically from the other on a significant matter. We are happy that we have been able to keep up this affection and understanding during all this period. We were assimilated in one another and were integrated as a whole like Parvati and Parameswara. The only flutter, of course a minor one, was when my husband resigned as Union Finance Minister.

From the beginning of 1956, I used to see Chintaman very thoughtful and sometimes restless. This was after three years of our marriage. I asked him what worried him. He replied that he had started feeling that he could not continue to function as Finance Minister. His advice on fiscal policy and measures had

always been accepted by the Prime Minister since he joined the Cabinet. But now he found that on a very important matter which had a bearing on his standing as an elected member of Parliament from the Colaba constituency his advice was being ignored and that Bombay city was going to be made a Centrally administered area. He felt convinced that this would be against the interests of the residents of a large territory surrounding Bombay except for the vested business interests. He had expressed his views to the Prime Minister as soon as he had heard of the abrupt change of position in this respect, and had been led to hope that the matter would be rectified. But he had found that at the final stage, the Prime Minister had brought in legislation for declaring Bombay a Centrally administered area. This had made his position untenable and he felt that it was his duty to resign. He told me that he also felt that Nehru was being influenced by the capitalists.

I felt that he was right on the merits of the issue. But the reaction of many members of Parliament and some of his Cabinet colleagues was against his resignation. They felt that the interests of the nation would suffer if he were to quit, as he had proved to be a very capable Finance Minister who had given concrete shape to the socialist policies of the government. Panditji was reluctant to accept his resignation and several of Chintaman's letters requesting to be relieved remained unanswered. A few of Chintaman's close friends asked me to persuade him to withdraw the resignation. I was in a dilemma. One day Chintaman told me that he had made up his mind to leave, whether or not his resignation was accepted. A letter addressed by him to the Prime Minister to this effect was typed and he instructed his private secretary to send it immediately. The secretary asked me, 'Madam, can't you persuade F.M. not to send this letter, just for a couple of days?' He said that everyone in the country was feeling that his resignation would not be in the national interest. I went to Chintaman and asked him, 'Why don't you wait for a couple of days? I wouldn't have

asked this if it were not for the good of the nation.' He quickly replied, 'Oh, you married me because I am the Finance Minister.' That clinched the issue. I left the room and went to his private secretary and asked him to despatch Chintaman's letter to the Prime Minister immediately. I didn't speak to him for a few days as I felt that he had misunderstood me. It was after he had made up with me that the silence was broken.

It was in Chintaman's time as Finance Minister during the period 1950-56 that a large volume of socialistic legislation, which gave form and content to Pandit Nehru's ideals of social justice, was put through: Nationalisation of the Reserve Bank, the Estate Duty Act, Company Law, nationalisation of life insurance and nationalisation of the Imperial Bank. It is worthwhile recalling that not one of these came to be challenged in a court of law as ultra vires of the Constitution.

During his tenure the country's foreign exchange position was extremely sound. There was no deficit financing, prices were low and steady, inflation was under check, the systems of control functioned well, and there was no talk of devaluation of the rupee.

I remember asking Chintaman once to show me the gold reserves kept in the Reserve Bank cellar. The Governor of the Reserve Bank Benegal Rama Rau, was only too happy to take his predecessor and his wife through the vaults of the bank. I also remember at the time seeing an oil painting of Chintaman in the Committee Room of the Central Office. I did not like it, mainly because it made him appear much older than he was. I said this to Sri Rama Rau, who said that he too thought so. Later, the Governor got a new oil painting of my husband done. I had a chance of seeing it on another occasion and liked it.

Almost immediately after he left the finance ministership, the Education Minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, sent the Education Secretary, Humayun Kabir, to request my husband to take up the chairmanship of the University Grants Commission which had just then been set up by an Act of

Parliament. Chintaman accepted the appointment, as he had developed a great deal of interest in education. He had dealt with the subject at one time as Joint Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Education, Health and Lands.

Two days after he had accepted the chairmanship of the University Grants Commission, Pandit Nehru sent Sri B.K. Nehru, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, to ask my husband if he would agree to a proposal made by the governments of the U.S.A. and the U.K. to nominate him as Director-General of the International Monetary Fund. This post of International Civil Servant was then and still is a highly prestigious one, with a salary of around \$30,000 a year plus perquisites. Sri B.K. Nehru also mentioned that the Prime Minister had told him that if Chintaman accepted this post, he would consider it a great honour to India. My husband told Sri Nehru that he would give his reaction after consulting me.

We discussed the matter and decided that a high salary did not mean anything to us and that we should work in and for our country and help the implementation of the various social and economic measures, many of which we had ourselves initiated. The offer was, therefore, turned down.

I do not know whether Pandit Nehru talked to Maulana Azad about this, but the Education Minister did call my husband and told him that he would appreciate his accepting the post of Director-General of the International Monetary Fund and that he would not want his earlier acceptance of chairmanship of the University Grants Commission to come in the way. My husband told him that his was a considered decision on a principle, and that he would prefer service to his country.

There has been an impression that Chintaman was one of the richest men in India and, therefore, money was no consideration for us. Soon after our marriage, my husband brought to me the cheque books of three accounts he was operating in the State Bank of India, Reserve Bank and Grindlays Bank, saying that I should henceforth take care of the finances and operate the

accounts jointly. I remember that one of the accounts showed a balance of two thousand five hundred rupees, another a balance of four thousand rupees. The Grindlays Bank account showed a balance of one or two thousand dollars. On the other hand, his liabilities included ten thousand rupees to be paid to the contractor who was building his house in Poona.

We had two cars – one mine and the other his. Both were Austin. We also had two drivers. My car was the latest model, his was an older one, bought in England. Both were coincidentally of the same colour. We thought it would be pointless to keep both the cars and therefore decided to dispose of one. We decided to retain my car.

We had decided that when one of us was earning, the other would not accept a salary, so that at any given time the services of one of us would be given to the nation free. We are happy that we were able to maintain this resolve. When I was full-time Chairman of the Central Social Welfare Board, Chintaman drew only one rupee as a token salary for the best part of his term as Chairman of the University Grants Commission, against his entitlement of about three thousand rupees per mensem. When he was drawing a salary as Vice-Chancellor of the Delhi University, I had left the post of Chairman, Central Social Welfare Board. Since then I have not worked on salary basis and my services have been given free in the activities I took up.

As Chairman of the University Grants Commission, Chintaman rendered a signal service to the teaching community of the universities by raising their emoluments to a reasonable and respectable level. A year after he had completed his tenure as Chairman of the University Grants Commission, he was selected as Vice-Chancellor of the Delhi University, in which capacity he served for the full term of five years till 1967. As Vice-Chancellor of the Delhi University he brought about many improvements. If only his advice had been accepted in the matter of creating a second university, so as to divide the heavy

load of the large number of students, and to streamline the complicated administrative procedures, the university's position perhaps would have been much better today.

Chintaman is known as a capable administrator and an able Finance Minister. But very few people know him as a devoted social worker. The Andhra Mahila Sabha and other welfare institutions, both in the South and in Delhi, have benefited greatly by his guidance and assistance from time to time. He never grudged helping these institutions in their day-to-day problems, studying them with patience and sincerity.

In many cases, retirement from office means the end of public work, This has not been so in the case of Chintaman. He has been serving many institutions, both national and international. The India International Centre in Delhi owes its existence and development to his untiring efforts. As the Life President of this institution, he has spared no pains to develop its activities to serve not only Indian academicians coming to Delhi but also their counterparts in different parts of the world who find a congenial home away from home in this institution.

As President of the Council for Social Development (and also of the Population Council of India till it had to be discontinued), he had contributed to the study of the social dynamics of economic development. His other activities have included the chairmanship of the Administrative Staff College of India at Hyderabad and of the Indian National Committee of the World University Service.

No summing up of the contribution of Chintaman would be complete without a grateful reference to his service to the dumb millions of trees, shrubs, and other species of the plant kingdom which have found in him a friend and an admirer who treated them with the same love and affection that he would have given to his own children.

VIII. Travel and Work

CHINTAMAN AND I travelled a great deal, mostly together, in our respective capacities – he as Finance Minister and I as Chairman of the Central Social Welfare Board. We felt that it would be a good thing if we studied in person the progress and the problems of the projects in different parts of the country in the field of education, health, agriculture, and industry. We were keen, in particular, to see the implementation of the Local Works Programme and the Community Development Projects, as both these were conceived to improve the lot of our rural masses.

From 1953 onwards we visited about two hundred eighty five of the then three hundred thirty districts in India. We travelled by plane, by train, by jeep and by bullock cart. After staying at the district headquarters for a couple of days, either in the municipal guest house or in the government dak bungalow, we would proceed to the block level.

Our tours had more than one purpose: to gain first-hand information of the progress of implementation of the projects launched at a huge cost; to identify the difficulties being experienced by people in charge of implementation (for instance, it may be that basic materials like steel, iron, cement, tiles, etc. were not available or there may be difficulty in their transportation to the project sites or there may be lack of trained manpower such as engineers and contractors or some of them

may not be willing to work in villages); and to find out how far the local people were extending their cooperation in implementing the projects. We had heard that in some places the people did not extend their full cooperation to the Block Development Officers or the Gram Sevikas or the Mukhya Sevikas who were in charge of my projects under the rural welfare extension programme.

We wanted to know the views and the wishes of the local people in regard to the projects designed for their area, and also to know their attitude towards providing matching contribution either in cash or in the shape of a piece of land to be given to the Central Social Welfare Board for constructing a maternity centre or a school for the children. Under the Local Works Programme, any voluntary welfare organisation in a State engaged in health, education, or social welfare, could adopt a couple of villages and design a project to either clean a disused tank, or make an approach road, or build a school, and raise up to ten thousand rupees either in cash or in kind. Against this, the Centre would provide a matching grant of ten thousand rupees to the organisation. The only condition was that the State government should certify that the organisation was a suitable and a genuine one. I am proud and happy to say that we could complete thirty thousand such works all over India – such as approach roads, schools, culverts, and health centres. Although these were small works, they met the needs of the people. I am further gratified that the Central Social Welfare Board in its rural welfare projects got three hundred acres of land throughout India given to it as matching contribution by the local people.

We would discuss the various matters connected with the projects with the District Collector, the members of Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis, as well as the local people. We would meet not only people belonging to the ruling party but also to the opposition groups.

Chintaman and I would sometimes travel as much as three

hundred miles a day by car, moving from one project area to another. It was not unusual for us to deliver twenty talks in a day between us, in English, Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, and sometimes in broken Tamil. We spoke not only at public meetings but also in colleges and schools and in hospitals, big and small, at the district and block levels. We must have laid foundation-stones and inaugurated new buildings at hundreds of places. We were accustomed to putting a report down immediately after a visit was over.

We visited not less than ten districts in each State. We also travelled extensively in the then Union Territories of Manipur and Tripura and in Meghalaya. We made it a point that we would not stay with any businessman or industrialist. We preferred the municipal guest house or village choultry, even though it was not always very comfortable.

We were punctual in our programmes during our visits. In some places we would find gatherings of hardly ten people. We were told that this was because they were not accustomed to punctuality: Congress ministers would be a couple of hours late on such occasions. We used to go ahead with the function or lecture even though there might be only a handful of people. This happened in the first few months; once our practice came to be known, people would collect in large numbers in time.

We also made it a point to read carefully the memoranda given to us by the villagers, discuss the problems with the Collector or other officials, and ask them why a particular work could not be completed or what accounted for the delay in starting it.

We were very happy that we undertook these tours – for about twenty days in a month. They provided us opportunities not only of getting to know people and their difficulties but also of learning about their attitude to the planning process, their willingness or otherwise to cooperate, and the reasons for their attitude. We learnt that in some areas the Collector or other official would design a particular project, such as a building or

other construction work, benefiting a group of villages without consulting, or without the consent of the villagers. This sometimes caused resentment. We did our best to correct this arbitrary approach. We would call all the block officials and the Collector and the President of the Zilla Parishad or the Panchayat Samithi, discuss the issues with them and tell them to take the people into confidence in all rural programmes before launching work. We would tell that they should ascertain from the people whether they would be willing to take care of maintenance after the work was completed and when Central aid was withdrawn. We strongly felt that this type of dialogue was necessary for any work to be successful, because the villagers had to realise that they would be the ultimate beneficiaries. Without mobilising the people's support from its very start, it would not be possible to involve them either in the completion of the project or in its maintenance.

During a visit to Samalkot in the East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, we found that an official had started to construct a building with a couple of rooms for starting a school. We felt that there was an undercurrent of resentment. On enquiry we found that the people of the area did not want a school building, as they felt that the school could be located in a public place like a temple or under a tree where the Panchayat used to meet; rather, they wanted a maternity centre with the services of a *dai*. I felt very angry at the way the official had gone about his work. I got announced through drumbeat that a meeting would be held the next day when a member of the Planning Commission and Chairman of the Central Social Welfare Board would meet the villagers and when officials like the Collector and the B.D.O. would also address them. The meeting took place and in consultation with the people, it was decided to build a maternity centre. To the surprise of all the visitors, the people then and there offered their matching contribution. I announced that the Centre would provide the services of a qualified *dai* and pay her salary.

I must, however, say that Chintaman and I were not really in favour of a matching contribution. We noticed that often the matching contribution came from the rich section of the villagers. This had undesirable consequences. The village usually consisted of two sections – the few rich and the many poor who had hardly one meal a day. The poor usually lived in hamlets far away from the centre of the village, and the distance between this section and the area where the rich lived was often more than one kilometre.

The concept of matching contribution was introduced by the Planning Commission for the rural welfare programmes in order to encourage the participation of the people and promote self-reliance. But this was misconceived, because in practice only a small number among the rich section of the village population could manage to give some matching contribution, either in cash or in kind – tiles, cement, steel, etc. But they would give this on the tacit understanding that the project would benefit them primarily. For instance, if an approach road was to be built, they would see to it that it started from their locality to the main road. Or, if a well was to be dug, they would want it within two hundred metres of their houses. Such local works were not useful to the majority of the villagers. I have heard hundreds of such instances.

The result was that the rich became richer and the disparities increased. The rich who paid the matching contribution somehow made it up. They came to be elected to the panchayats, local boards, and even as M.L.A.s or M.P.s, some of them becoming ministers. The technique they usually adopted was to play host to a minister or a deputy minister when he came to visit their village, providing him with accommodation and other facilities, and managed in return to get his support during elections. This was the undesirable outcome of the concept of matching contribution, and I hope that it would be given up.

We thus gained rich experience during our travels, which gave

us insights into several aspects of the planning process in the country and the pitfalls of implementation.

It was Pandit Nehru who said that the big projects shaping the country's future were the 'temples of modern India'. We had opportunities of visiting several of these such as the Bhakra Nangal in Punjab, the Damodar Valley Project in Bihar, the Rourkela Project in Orissa, the Nagarjunasagar Project in Andhra Pradesh, and the Bhilai Steel Plant in Madhya Pradesh.

We never missed visiting public gardens during our visits to different places, and would buy new plants which we did not have in our garden.

Nor did we miss visiting the famous temples of pre-modern India which testify to the greatness of our culture and religion. Among the major temples we visited are: Rameswaram in the extreme south, where, according to mythology, Rama underwent penance to atone for the sin of killing Ravana who was a Brahmin; Madurai with its famous Meenakshi temple; Sri Ranganatha temple of Srirangam, near Tiruchi; Kamakshi Ammal temple of Kanchipuram; Parthasarathi temple and Kapaleswara temple in Madras; Padmanabha Swami temple in Kerala; Sri Venkateswara temple of Tirupati; Viswanath temple in Banaras; Pandarinath temple and Paravati temple in Maharashtra; Satyanarayana Swami at Annavaram, Narasimha Swami of Simhachalm, Bhimeswaralayam of Draksharamam, Ramachandra in Bhadrachalam, and Mallikarjuna Swami temple of Srisailem – all in Andhra Pradesh; Belur and Halebid in Karnataka; Chittodgad temple in Rajasthan; Shyamala in Simla; and Chandi Devi in Chandigarh. When we visited the temple in Chittodgad, Chintaman and I sang some of the better-known songs like 'Hari Guna Gaatha Nachongi', 'Mere Tho Giridhara Gopala', sitting at the same place where Meera is reputed to have sung. I have mentioned all this as the background to the good turn done to temples by Chintaman as Finance Minister. At the request of the temple trustees and managements, he did his best in exempting from

taxes the diamonds used for making jewellery and thrones for the gods and goddesses in temples. This received the unanimous support of members of Parliament and was widely appreciated by the public.

We would not have been able to enlarge our understanding of India and her people unless we had undertaken these extensive tours of the country and come into contact with people in their diverse surroundings. We were able to know India's great heritage and the strength and capability of our people despite long years of suppression under foreign rule.

We also travelled together a great deal outside of the country till 1972, when we had to resign, for health reasons, some of our official positions on bodies like UNICEF so far as I was concerned, and on UNITAR (United Nations Institute of Training and Research), a special agency of the United Nations of which Chintaman was Vice-President.

It was in June-July 1953 that we made our first visit abroad together, to Sri Lanka, to attend a session of the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee.

The very name of Sri Lanka fascinated me both because of the mythological and historical associations between our two countries and because my teacher 'Gora' had worked in Sri Lanka as a university lecturer; indeed that was his very first appointment after he qualified himself to teach Botany.

Sir Oliver Gunatilake was the Governor-General and Sir John Kotlawala the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka at the time. Kotlawala was Cambridge-educated like Chintaman. He drove us to various places of interest and also to his hometown which was near the Peradenia Gardens. He was a cultured man with refined tastes. His bungalow was like a fort and we saw the many animals he was rearing. He was surprised to note Chintaman's knowledge of flowers, shrubs, their origin and characteristics. He was particularly struck when Chintaman corrected the name of the lily in the pond in the Peradenia Gardens. We collected a lot of buds and cuttings and brought

them to India. We met the Opposition Leader, Bandaranaike, and addressed a number of meetings. I studied the working of the Lanka Mahila Samiti, a popular organisation with hundreds of branches all over the country, which worked for the welfare of women and children.

In our first joint visit to the U.S.A. in 1954, as on subsequent visits to countries with a sizable number of Indian residents, we made it a point to address meetings of Indian students and also those who had settled down in different vocations, some as medical practitioners and others as scientists and businessmen. There was a desire in most of them to return to India and work for the country, but they found it difficult to do so, as the salary structure in India was very low compared to the emoluments they were getting abroad. I would tell them that they owed a duty to work for their country, because the cost of their higher education in India had been borne largely by the Indian masses. It was only when India became rich that they would have the right to claim higher wages. Till then they would have to share the trying time with their Indian brothers and work under comparatively difficult circumstances.

It was during our second visit to the U.S.A., on the invitation of the Rockefeller Foundation, that we established contacts with many persons who were to help us in planning and building up the India International Centre in Delhi. The Rockefeller Foundation gave a grant of about five million rupees for the establishment of the Centre. It was also during this visit that we came into close touch with the work of the United Nations and its specialised agencies. Among those I got to know in New York were Miss Julia Henderson, Director of the U.N. Bureau of Social Affairs, Paul Hoffman, connected with the Development Aid Programme; U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations; and Sri C.V. Narasimhan, Under-Secretary General (Sri Narasimhan was Joint Secretary in the Finance Ministry when Chintaman was Minister). I had the opportunity of studying the set-up the Human Rights Commission, the

World Court, the Women's Status Section, the Section of Urban Welfare Expansion Projects, and, finally, the Section connected with Social Defence. Miss Julia Henderson and I became close friends later on and worked together on many projects. It was she who helped me to strengthen the Council for Social Development which I started in the year 1962 after retiring from the Chairmanship of the Central Social Welfare Board. She helped in getting Mr. Henning Friis, Director of the Danish National Institute of Social Research, Copenhagen, to be our Adviser for a period of six months. The government of Denmark agreed to lend him on loan to the Council for Social Development. The cost of Henning Friis' deputation in India was met by the United Nations and particularly by Paul Hoffman's organisation on a request made by Miss Henderson at my instance.

Henning Friis helped us in many ways to strengthen the Council for Social Development which today occupies a leading place among the country's research organisations. He prepared a document* dealing with the Council's research programme for five years in the social and economic fields.

Though in both the Preamble and Chapter IV (Directive Principles of State Policy) of the Indian Constitution many welfare ideas are incorporated, they are 'non-justiciable'. Non-compliance with them could not be challenged in a court of law, (Only the Fundamental Rights mentioned in Chapter III of the Constitution are justiciable). As a member of the Constituent Assembly, I had moved an amendment and pleaded that the Directive Principles, being non-justiciable, would only remain on paper unless we introduced a system that made it necessary for the government to place a report on the Table of the House for information of members on the progress of implementation of the Directive Principles. But my amendment was lost. The

*Henning Friis. *Social Policy and Social Research in India and the Contribution of the Council for Social Development*, New Delhi; Council for Social Development, 1968.

document which we in the Council for Social Development prepared on Social Policy became the basis for Henning Friis' report.

The Bureau of Social Affairs in the U.N. worked mainly for social welfare programmes in underdeveloped countries, but it had not formulated a policy to guide the designing of the welfare measures. The CSD document was, therefore, in great demand in the Bureau of Social Welfare in the United Nations. Miss Henderson sought our permission to print the entire document as part of their annual report.

My visit to the Department of HEW (Health, Education and Welfare) at Washington, D.C., helped me to develop in the Andhra Mahila Sabha a section for the physically handicapped and the mentally retarded and their training and rehabilitation as part of the health programmes undertaken by the Sabha at Madras. I secured six lakh rupees from this Department of the U.S. government to help cerebral palsey children. Arising out of the report and the recommendations of the HEW, further help was forthcoming for establishing the rehabilitation section for the mentally retarded spastic children. The Orthopaedic Section of the Andhra Mahila Sabha in Madras is considered to be one of the leading institutions in this particular field of physical medicine. It attracted eminent persons like Dr. Natarajan, the Project Director, and Dr. B. Ramamurthy, the neuro-surgeon. HEW also helped me later to raise another seven lakh rupees to build up a training-cum-production industrial unit for the blind in Delhi. This institution known as Blind Relief Association (BRA), a voluntary organisation, has been doing commendable work.

Not only did we come into contact with the governments of the countries we visited, but also with a number of voluntary welfare organisations such as World University Service; 'War on Want'; Freedom from Hunger Campaign; World Literacy of Canada; World Education Bureau; 'Meals for Millions'; and American Foundation for Overseas Blind.

Our third visit to the U.S.A. was in the year 1963 when we were invited by the Director-General of the U.N.'s Food & Agriculture Organisation at Rome to attend a World Food Congress to be held in Washington. Chintaman was asked to be the Chairman of a Committee to prepare the agenda and examine the proposals sent by the representatives of the member countries. The World Food Congress was to meet our travel expenditure and make arrangements for our stay in Washington, D.C. Nearly fifteen hundred people were invited to attend: they included representatives of both the governments and the voluntary social welfare organisations of nearly one hundred twenty countries. This Congress is held once every five years.

John F. Kennedy, then President of the United States of America, presided over the Congress and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, then President of the Indian Republic, inaugurated it. It was a great occasion. Apart from the Big Powers, the participants included an appreciable number of Asian, African and Latin American nations. Some sessions were specially for discussing the role of voluntary organisations and how they could cooperate with the governments in raising food production.

The main point of the paper I presented at the Congress was that it was not only the quantity but also the quality of food that was important. I also pleaded for the establishment of training institutions for workers in the field of food and nutrition. Chintaman was elected to the Governing Body of the World Food Congress, which was charged with the responsibility of following up the recommendations arising out of the deliberations.

On a visit to Geneva we studied the working of the European Division of Social Affairs which had just been constituted under the Bureau of Social Welfare of the United Nations and which was similar to the Council for Social Development in India. Discussions with the office-bearers of this body in Geneva led me to think that we could usefully take up certain action-cum-research projects such as non-formal education with a package

programme of family life education, fundamental literacy, and development and improvement of child nutrition. By this time I was appointed a member of the International Liaison Committee of UNESCO for eradication of illiteracy in the world and particularly in the developing countries. In addition, I was taken as a member of the Committee on Social Defence, Crime and Correctional Administration a body constituted under the direction of the Economic and Social Commission of the United Nations whose Director was Edward Galway. It had its headquarters in Rome.

We visited Japan in 1959-60 in connection with the establishment of the India International Centre. There was an International Centre in Tokyo aided by the Rockefeller Foundation. Mr. Matsu Moto was the Director-General of this Centre. In a way, the Japanese Centre and the Indian Centre could be regarded as twins, as their aims and strategy were the same. The Japanese Centre came into being much earlier, and was based on the support of industry, bankers and newspapermen, while the international Centre in Delhi is based on support mainly from Indian universities. Matsu Moto was educated and trained in America, so also were his wife and children. He was a very competent man coming from the newspaper world. We spent about three weeks as guests of the International Centre in Tokyo, which arranged our visits to various industrial and cultural centres like Osaka, Kyoto and Nara. Both of us addressed several meetings, among other places, at the Tokyo Imperial University and the Women's University in Tokyo.

We visited Bangkok thrice and on the third visit in 1965 we stayed for a couple of months as Chintaman and I were appointed as two of the five consultants of UNESCO for the preparation of a perspective plan (for twenty five-years) for educational development of Asia and South East Asia. This time we took a house in Bangkok. Our home life was made very pleasant by the two Ayahs whom we took from the Thai

community and who learnt to cook Indian food in no time. We were delighted to see trees like *Ademis Obasa* and *Nuscenda* which flowered throughout the year.

We visited Denmark and the Soviet Union on our way back from a visit to the U.S.A. At Copenhagen we met the concerned officials of the government of Denmark to discuss the proposals which we had made for a survey research and training project under the auspices of the Council for Social Development. After finishing our work we spent a day with Henning Friis and his family.

We took the plane back to India via Moscow. Chintaman had been invited by the Academy of Social Sciences to inaugurate a project for the exchange of scholars between Indian and Soviet universities. We paid a visit to Patrice Lumumba University. After we finished our work in Moscow, we went to Leningrad and visited the historic places there and attended several cultural programmes before returning to India.

IX. Goodbye to Delhi

AFTER I LAID down office as Chairman, Central Social Welfare Board, in 1962 after a tenure of nearly ten years, I resumed my legal practice in the Supreme Court. Chintaman and I were staying in the Director's quarters of the India International Centre, which the architect, Joseph Allen Stein, had taken special care to design. When I resumed my legal practice in October, I thought that as I had been out of the field for ten years I would not be able to command good practice, but to my surprise I was to appear in some important cases within a few months.

My husband was at the time Chairman of the Maharani Bagh Cooperative Housing Society. As per the rules of the Society the Chairman was required to own a plot. We were at the time proposing to settle down in Delhi, and therefore purchased a plot for thirty-four thousand rupees. We had the money readily available as by that time we had sold our house 'Yojana' in Poona. We had disposed of our Poona house as we could hardly find time to go there and spend our vacations. We sold the house for one lakh thirty thousand rupees – the exact amount spent by Chintaman – to the American Institute of Indian Studies, of which Mr. Norman Cousins was the head. Chintaman was a member of this Institute. The Maharani Bagh colony is on the Ring Road, near the crossing of the Mathura Road. Chintaman had calculated the distance and found that it would take only

seven minutes to reach the Supreme Court from there and that it would be convenient for both of us to live there and conduct our practice in the Supreme Court. Chintaman too had got himself enrolled in the Supreme Court. He used to tell me that he would help me in my legal practice as my *junior* after he left the Delhi University!

However, about the time of Chintaman's completion of his term of Vice Chancellor in 1967, we gave up the idea of constructing a house in Delhi and decided to settle down in Hyderabad.

It all happened this way. Chintaman and I were one day sitting in the garden of the Vice Chancellor's Lodge, discussing the question of construction of a house in Maharani Bagh for which Allen Stein had prepared the plans. The estimated cost was one lakh seventy-five thousand rupees. I should say that we liked the design, but we reasoned that if we spent all the money available with us on a house it would be difficult for us to live in Delhi which was a very costly place. We therefore felt that it would be better to settle down in Hyderabad where we could construct a house on the land we had purchased in 1964. We never regretted this decision.

There were several reasons for our preferring Hyderabad to Delhi. For one thing, the atmosphere in Delhi was increasingly vitiated by political conflict and becoming intellectually uncongenial. Secondly, the rural areas of Hyderabad and the districts of Telengana were backward and undeveloped from many points of view. The incidence of illiteracy and ill-health was high. We thought that if we settled down in Hyderabad we would have plenty of scope to work for the social and economic development of this backward region. The Andhra Mahila Sabha had already started a branch at Hyderabad and we would be able to work through it and cooperate with the government in its efforts to develop the undeveloped region. Since our niece Leela, daughter of my brother Narayana Rao, had settled down in Hyderabad after her marriage with Sri Madhava Rao Baji of

the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation, we would be able to stay with them pending the completion of construction of our house. Finally, the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for their beauty, quietness, and cultural life.

During one of our visits to Hyderabad we had been informed by the Bajis that some residential plots were available at a very reasonable rate for sale in Bagh Amberpet Colony which was not very far from their house. The Andhra Mahila Sabha institutions³ situated in Vidyanagar were between the Bajis' house and these plots, and within five minutes' ride from the plots. Further, the site was well situated on an elevated slope. My mother considered the plots suitable for the possible construction of a house by us. We went ahead and bought sixteen hundred square yards. We also bought two adjoining plots, each of twelve hundred square yards. The cost was only seven rupees a square yard. Above all, it was so close to the Osmania University that the Engineering College, the projected Agricultural College, and the university's main landscape garden were within four hundred yards.

An idea occurred to me that, as the plots were selling cheap, some of the stall members of the Andhra Mahila Sabha institutions could be encouraged to invest in small plots to build their own houses at their convenience. The Andhra Mahila Sabha accordingly sanctioned housing loans to half a dozen of the staff members.

When word passed around that Chintaman and I had bought a plot of land and were going to build a house for settling down there, people belonging to various professions like teaching, banking, and medicine also bought up the available plots.

Though all this was encouraging, there was the discouraging fact that the area was outside the municipal corporation limits and there were no facilities of water, electricity, drainage, and roads, not even unmetalled ones. The area had to be developed for the provision of these basic amenities. I persuaded all those

who bought house sites in the area to pay the registration and development charges. The amount thus collected by the municipal corporation came to about one lakh of rupees. As my husband was still the Vice Chancellor of Delhi University we were most of the time in Delhi. Leela Baji took charge of the site (which was full of thorns and pits), got it cleared and levelled, and started to plant trees. She also had got a well dug and planted mangoes, cocoanuts, oranges and several varieties of flowering trees. Chintaman guided her on the varieties of shrubs and flowering trees.

Within a short time the municipal corporation provided electricity and also laid metalled roads and water pipes. The first to construct a house there was Dr. D.S. Reddy, the Vice Chancellor of Osmania University. His plot was adjoining to ours. The second person who constructed a house was a leading advocate of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, Sri Manduri Bapiraju.

We started the construction of our own house in 1967, and named it 'Rachana'. It meant 'construction' or 'reconstruction' (it may be recalled that Mahatma Gandhi named his constructive programme as 'Rachanatmaka Karyakramam'), and we felt that it was an apt sequel to our first house in Poona which we had named 'Yojana' (planning).

Though 'Rachana' was not ready for occupation we conducted the formal house-entry ceremony in April 1967, and finally moved into the house on 7 June 1967. The person whom we sadly missed on the occasion was my mother. She had passed away on 7 March 1965 at Madras.

Though my mother had been apprehensive that our different backgrounds might clash, she got over that anxiety very soon when she found Chintaman to be warm and affectionate. She likened him as her son. Several times I found Chintaman relaxing with his head in her lap, and it gladdened me. At lunch and dinner time she would sit by his side and check every dish that was served.

My husband's main occupation for some time was to grow a garden in 'Rachana'. The soil was reddish and hard; it was good for house-building, but not so much for raising a garden. However, by the time of this writing, Chintaman's labour has borne fruit in raising a beautiful garden with fruit and flowering trees, flowering shrubs, and a small lawn bordered by good quality roses. We have two lovely mango trees, which have not failed to give us about a hundred fruit every year, and also two cocoanut trees. Chintaman picked up a number of varieties of creepers and flowering shrubs among which I should mention the Magnolia from Calcutta and Adenis Obvoza and Muscenda collected at Bangkok.

I was pleasantly surprised when one fine morning the Municipal Commissioner called on me to have my permission for naming our colony as 'Durgabai Deshmukh Colony'. He told me that the colony now extended from Sivam to Amberpet where the road joined Malakpet leading to Vijayawada road. I was later told that the Municipal Corporation passed a resolution unanimously adopting the name. It was an honour which I did not think I deserved.

Chintaman kept good health and did not suffer from any major illness till July 1977. On 25 July he told me at about four in the morning, after he had had a sound sleep, that he was going to the toilet. He took a long time to return. He told me that he had a loose motion and passed no urine. I thought that it was strange. I took his temperature. It was 99.6 degrees. X-ray and other investigations followed.

Sunday 7 August 1977 was my sixty-ninth birthday. A function had been fixed for that day at the Andhra Mahila Sabha at half past five in the evening. Chintaman was to preside, and Smt. Sharada Mukherjee, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, was to inaugurate the Administrative Block and the Post Office of the Andhra Mahila Sabha, constructed at a cost of little over one lakh of rupees, and also to release my biography written by Smt. Neti Sita Devi in Telugu. The function went off well, and

Chintaman stood it very well. Further investigations were taken up on 8 August. It turned out that he would have to be taken to Bombay for diagnoses and possible surgery.

Eventually, Chintaman had to undergo three major and two minor abdominal operations at the Tata Memorial Hospital and the Bombay Hospital. The skilful surgeon was Dr. T.P. Kulkarni.

Finding accommodation in Bombay for those of us who went from Hyderabad to be with Chintaman during his treatment was not easy. I received valuable help from Sri Sadiq Ali, Governor of Maharashtra and his wife Shanti. I could well imagine how much more difficult, if not impossible, it would be for ordinary people, without connections in high places, to bring patients to Bombay for treatment.

As I had to spend the greater part of the day alone during Chintaman's treatment, I began to think about his illness and why it had come about, whether it could not have been prevented, and so on. I thought that unless I could divert my mind from these thoughts, which were full of agony and anxiety, my health would break down. Some kind of occupational therapy was necessary. I came to the conclusion that I should attempt to write a book, *Chintaman and I*.

I felt that I should mention this to Chintaman, who was still in hospital. I mentioned it to him in September when he had made some progress. I told him, 'Babi, I want to write a book "Chintaman and I". I would like to begin the book with "Can I see your Governor?"'. I was happy that Chintaman could understand the context. He welcomed the project.

X. Private Misfortune Leads to Public Weal

THE BIRTH OF voluntary social welfare organisations can in many instances be traced to a widening of sympathy caused by the misfortune of the near and dear ones. Let me mention some cases illustrating how private misfortune has led to public weal, before narrating the instance in which Chintaman and I were ourselves involved.

The Iswari Prasad Dattatreya Orthopaedic Centre of the Andhra Mahila Sabha in Madras would not have come into being but for the misfortune which Lakshmi Parvathi Garu and her husband Hanumantha Rao Garu had to face when their only child, Iswari Prasad Dattatreya, died as a boy of nine due to orthopaedic ailment and mental retardation. Hanumantha Rao held a senior position as Secretary of the Transport Department of the government of Madras. Although the parents spared no effort to save the child they could not succeed. Soon after the death of the boy, they came to see me when I was on a visit to Madras. They told me, with tears rolling down their eyes, that they would like to donate one lakh rupees to the Andhra Mahila Sabha Trust Board to enable it to do whatever I considered to be most appropriate to perpetuate the memory of their son. I consulted Chintaman and my brother Narayana Rao. All the three of us felt that it would be best to start a unit in the Andhra Mahila Sabha Nursing Home for treating the orthopaedically handicapped and mentally retarded children.

The Hanumantha Rao couple were happy to know this and today the Iswari Prasad Dattatreya Orthopaedic Centre of the Andhra Mahila Sabha is considered to be one of the leading institutions of its kind in the country. The Centre has all necessary facilities such as Physiotherapy, Hydrotherapy, a well-equipped Operation Theatre, an X-ray Unit, a school for the mentally retarded children, a vocational rehabilitation unit, and a Brace Workshop. The quality of work done there was of such a high order that it qualified soon for financial assistance from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare of the U.S. government. This enabled the Orthopaedic Centre to admit cerebral palsy cases for treatment and to quicken their relief by brain surgery.

Another notable example of private misfortune leading to public weal is provided by my friend Smt. Fatima Ismail, a leading social worker of Bombay. She started a workshop in Bombay for the physically handicapped of all kinds. I visited the workshop and was greatly impressed by the training that was being given there. It led to the rehabilitation of the physically handicapped, who were enabled to earn decent wages. How did this institution come into being? One of the daughters of Smt. Fatima Ismail had lost the use of her leg. She was taken to the U.S.A. for treatment. There was no cure and she had to reconcile to her cruel fate. It was this misfortune that led Smt. Fatima Ismail to start an institution for the welfare of the physically handicapped.

I know of some people who volunteered to donate their eyes to give relief to the blind, as one of their children happened to be born blind or had become blind after a small-pox attack. Helen Keller was a classic example: she became blind when she was a child but derived great satisfaction from serving the whole world of the blind. Similar is the origin of the Cardio-Vascular (Diagnostic and Therapeutic Service) Unit which is taking shape in Hyderabad.

After Chintaman started to recover from the major surgery in

Bombay I began to wonder how he developed those tumours in the abdomen. This kind of operation for aneurysm and enlarged and twisted aorta was not known to lay people like me; even in the medical world it was not very familiar. Was it not strange that in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh, with two very big government hospitals – the Osmania Hospital and the Gandhi Hospital – and a number of private Nursing Homes run by eminent physicians and surgeons, an operation of this kind could not be performed, and even investigations could not be carried out? I began to feel strongly that people of our type, belonging to the middle and upper class category, could somehow manage to take the patients to places like Bombay or Vellore where facilities existed for the treatment, though costly, of such cases. It is not only difficult to get the necessary finance, but also a problem to find a place for the relations of the patient to live in a city like Bombay. I began to wonder what poor people could do if they faced such a situation. They could neither afford the expenditure nor have access to the facilities I had managed to obtain for Chintaman in Bombay.

Then I resolved that I ought to work for the establishment of a unit for the diagnosis and treatment of such cases in Hyderabad. I could not sleep until I shared my thoughts with Chintaman. Meanwhile Dr. T.P. Kulkarni informed me that Chintaman's stitches were going to be removed on 5 October. I waited till then. Next day I went to see him in the morning and found only a nurse attending on him. Chintaman could appreciate what I said, and when I told him that I had decided to donate twenty-five thousand rupees from our personal savings as the nucleus of a fund for the benefit of those who could not afford to go from Hyderabad and its neighbourhood to Bombay or Vellore for cardio-vascular treatment, Chintaman smiled and said, 'You can go ahead with your plan. It is a very good thing.' This encouragement gave me the required strength and my determination was sharpened and deepened.

I also told Chintaman that I shall will away our house 'Rachana' to a public cause, particularly for medical education, medical training, and action oriented medical research. The house together with land it stands on is worth at present about three-and-half lakh rupees. This will was registered and read out at a public function when the Intensive Coronary Care Unit (ICCU) was inaugurated by Sri H.M. Patel, when he was Finance Minister of India.

Within the next two days some of our relations, a few doctors, and my brother-in-law Dr. Madhukar Deshmukh came to know of the decision and warmly welcomed it. We left Bombay for Hyderabad on 10 October accompanied by Dr. T.P. Kulkarni and Dr. Madhukar. I started to plan for the cardio-vascular unit in Hyderabad from then onwards.

I requested Dr. Kulkarni to be the Honorary Consultant and Adviser of the Unit if and when it was established in Hyderabad. I also told him that I would approach some voluntary organisations and foundations, both in India and abroad, which would appreciate the cause and encourage us with some financial assistance. Dr. Kulkarni welcomed the idea and agreed to let me have a blueprint of the set-up, including the financial outlay.

I began to enlist the support both of local doctors and other potential helpers, and of foreign well-wishers of India, in my project. Soon after our return, Dr. Robert E. Goheen, U.S. Ambassador in India, wrote to us to say that he was visiting Hyderabad shortly and that he was anxious to meet us. His trip to Hyderabad was in connection with the handing over of a 'Ready to Eat' food factory to the government of Andhra Pradesh. Chintaman and I were happy about the forthcoming reunion as we had met Dr. Goheen and his wife in America in 1962 when Princeton University, of which Dr. Goheen was then President, conferred an honorary Doctorate on Chintaman.

Dr. Goheen was born in Venkurla, small town in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. His father was a missionary doctor. He

had established a clinic in Venkurla which has now grown into a full-fledged hospital serving several villages around. When Dr. Goheen and his wife visited India later, they were our guests at the India International Centre. We suggested that they make a trip to Venkurla, as the people there would be happy to receive them. They did go to Venkurla and we were pleased to hear from him that Mrs. Goheen was received with all the ceremony that is accorded to an Indian bride when she comes to the mother-in-law's place: breaking of the cocoanut and the present of a silk sarêe, blouse, fruits, and flowers. Dr. Goheen said it was an unforgettable experience for him and for his wife.

When Dr. Goheen visited Hyderabad towards the close of 1977, he went round the College campus and the Nursing Home campus of the Andhra Mahila Sabha and I explained to him about my cardio-vascular unit project. He asked me to send him the blueprint of the unit when it was received from Dr. Kulkarni.

Another development was Dr. C. Gopalan's visit to Hyderabad in connection with an international seminar on 'Child Food'. Dr. Gopalan is now Director-General of the Indian Council for Medical Research at Delhi. We had come to know Dr. Gopalan when he was in Hyderabad as Director of the Nutrition Research Laboratory which is now called the National Institute of Nutrition. Though I wanted to talk to Dr. Gopalan in person about our project, I only got him on the telephone as he was very busy with the seminar. I mentioned it to him on the telephone and he not only expressed his appreciation of the steps I had taken but also said that the I.C.M.R. would be interested in this kind of project. The I.C.M.R. supported research projects and there were guidelines in regard to them, but he thought that the definition of research could be stretched to give financial assistance for travel and a fellowship for training in cardio-vascular diagnostics and surgery in Bombay.

I started to write to others who would be interested in helping this project. I wrote first to John Rockefeller III, enclosing

a copy of my scheme and detailing the circumstances which led to my decision, narrating Chintaman's illness, operation, and the treatment in Bombay. I wrote also to Dr. Douglas Ensminger whom Chintaman and I knew intimately when he was Representative of the Ford Foundation in India. Chintaman and he used to meet almost every week since the Ford Foundation office happened to be next door to the India International Centre. Indeed, the plaza of the India International Centre was a joint project of the Centre and the Ford Foundation, and was dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Dr. Ensminger was a very dynamic person who was closely connected with the working of India's Planning Commission and also of several projects funded by the Ford Foundation.

I also got in touch with friends in Delhi to find out the procedures in the Ministry of Health for securing a grant for equipment. I came to know that the size of the grant from the Centre could be up to one lakh of rupees for the purchase of equipment needed for the Unit. I wanted to find out the position regarding the availability of equipment, and telephoned Sri Vijayakar who was the Acting General Manager of the Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL) at Hyderabad. A few days later Sri Balaji rang me up from ECIL and said that he had been asked to go to the Mahila Sabha premises to find out what exactly were the facilities existing there from the point of view of accommodation, equipment, operation theatre, etc. Sri Balaji spent a couple of hours surveying the existing facilities and the requirements of the project. From my talks with Sri Vijayakar and Sri Balaji I got the idea that the equipment would cost about three lakh rupees. I added another two lakh to the estimate, towards the construction of five rooms by way of addition to the existing facilities: one each for operation theatre, intensive care room, air-conditioned upkeep of the equipment, the doctor, and the para-medical staff such as nurses on duty.

Reproduced below are extracts from an appeal I prepared in November 1977 for financial assistance for the establishment of

the Unit:

'The Andhra Mahila Sabha has completed forty years of useful service in the field of social welfare. During this period, the Sabha has built up many institutions, in both Madras and Hyderabad and also in eleven districts of Andhra Pradesh. The services organised by the Sabha are in the field of Health, Medical Care and Nursing, and Education from Pre-Primary to the College level including the Arts and Science College and the College of Education. The Sabha has contributed to the cause of Adult Education, Literacy including Functional Literacy, and Non-Formal Education for Rural Women leading to the stage of total Family Welfare.

'The Sabha's properties today are worth about thirteen million rupees excluding the land. Seventy-five per cent of this has been raised through voluntary donations and the balance through grants by the Central and State governments. The Sabha today is more proud of its hundreds of dedicated, spirited, selfless, and able voluntary workers, both men and women, than of its assets in buildings and equipment, valuable though they are. It is these workers who have helped the Sabha to render more and more service to the needy and the suffering.

'The Mahila Sabha has a Board of Trustees numbering twenty consisting of eminent men and women like Dr. Chintaman Deshmukh, Sri P.V. Raghava Rao, Justice A. Gangadhara Rao, Sri M. Bapiraju, senior advocate of the Supreme Court, Sri M. Anandam, auditor and M.P., Sri B.V.D. Narayana Rao, Secretary, Board of Trustees, and Dr. M. Natarajan, internationally-known orthopaedic surgeon, with Dr. (Smt.) Durgabai Deshmukh, Founder-President of the Andhra Mahila Sabha, as the President of the Board of Trustees. The Trust Board is directly in charge of policy making, review of the activities from year to year, and also the finances of the Sabha.

'The Sabha is now launching upon a major project which is much needed in the medical field, namely the establishment of a Cardio-Vascular (Diagnostic and Therapeutic Service) Unit in

Hyderabad. Dr. Chintaman Deshmukh's recent illness which finally led to his undergoing several operations in Bombay hospitals was followed by the Andhra Mahila Sabha with great anxiety. Dr. (Smt.) Durgabai Deshmukh felt that it was her duty not only as his wife but also as a public worker that she should take the initiative in establishing a Cardio-Vascular (Diagnostic & Therapeutic Service) Unit in the Andhra Mahila Sabha Nursing Home at the earliest possible time. Such facilities for the diagnosis, investigation and surgical treatment of cardiovascular ailments are not available in adequate measure in Hyderabad, and it will be very useful to establish such facilities here to benefit the poor and the needy who cannot afford costly treatment for ailments like cancer, heart and kidney trouble, for which facilities are now available only in Bombay and in Vellore.

'It is necessary and important to state that though the Andhra Mahila Sabha was established in Madras by the Andhras in the year 1937, when Madras was the capital city of the composite Madras Presidency, in its working the Mahila Sabha has thrown open all its services – medical, public health, educational, and welfare – to men, women, and children belonging to all castes, all communities, and all language-speaking groups. Even after Andhra was formed in the early 1950's the Andhra Mahila Sabha at Madras continues to serve all sections of the population.

'This appeal is addressed to public-spirited men and women for their consideration and generous financial assistance.

Things have started moving encouragingly. It became possible to inaugurate an Intensive Cardiac Care Unit on 16 May 1979 as the first step towards a full-fledged Cardio-Vascular (Diagnostic & Therapeutic) Unit.

XI. The World of Books

MANY OF CHINTAMAN'S poems written in Sanskrit would not have been preserved but for a little care that I took. I used to find in his pockets almost every day on his return from Parliament House a number of small paper balls. One day I noticed a piece of paper on which a beautiful Sanskrit verse was written. He wrote these verses while listening to speeches by members. Earlier the little paper balls used to be thrown away. I took him to task one day and imposed some kind of home work – writing out these pieces of poetry neatly in an exercise book. They got copied at the rate of about five per day. We find them in print today in a collection of his Sanskrit poems, *Sanskrit Kavya Malika*, published by Motilal Banarasidas and Sons, Delhi.

Chintaman would compose verses in Hindi too while listening to debates in Parliament. One of his Hindi poems prepared on the spot was recited as a part of a speech as Union Finance Minister. It was in reply to a point made by Maithili Saran Gupta, the renowned Hindi poet, and the House burst into laughter. The subject-matter was the raising of taxes generally and in particular the book-post rate.

Among the works included in *Sanskrit Kavya Malika* is 'Gandhi Sukti Muktavali' consisting of one hundred short stanzas. Chintaman wrote this mostly during our journeys by plane and by train during 1957. He knew several hundred wise

sayings of Mahatma Gandhi, out of which he selected one hundred and translated them into Sanskrit.

Some of Chintaman's Sanskrit verses have been included in text-books for High School students in Maharashtra. Some of the stanzas from 'Gandhi Sukti Muktavali' are recited by the High School students of Andhra Mahila Sabha in Hyderabad every day and also by students of some other schools in Andhra Pradesh.

All India Radio has invited Chintaman more than once to participate in its annual Kavi Sammelan in Sanskrit at Delhi and other stations. Of his Sanskrit poems, one entitled 'Ravindra Vandana' is perhaps the best known. It was specially written to be presented to Rabindranath Tagore when Chintaman, accompanied by his friend Professor Mahalanobis, went to pay his respects to the poet at Santiniketan in the year 1941. Chintaman's poem was appreciated by the poet, who responded by reciting one of his own poems in Bengali, namely 'Avirbhava'. Chintaman translated 'Vasavadatta' and other poems of Tagore from Bengali into Marathi. Besides this and his translation of Kalidasa's *Meghdoot*, Chintaman has also written originally in Marathi. The poem on 'Krishnaraj Sagar' is outstanding for its delicate imagination. The verse was translated into Kannada by Dr. Puttappa, who was then Vice Chancellor of Mysore University. It was also translated into Telugu by Sri B. Rajanikanta Rao, who now heads the Kalakshetra centre at Tirupati; he also set it to a beautiful tune. It was later adopted by several institutions, among them the Andhra Mahila Sabha in Madras which produced a beautiful dance-drama based on it and staged it at a cultural function.

Chintaman does not claim to be a creative writer in English, but he employs the language with great felicity. During his career as a general administrator he had occasion to write many reports. One, on the 'Resettlement of the Raipur District (Khalsa)', published in 1931, is regarded as a classic of its kind. However, it was only after he became Governor of the Reserve

Bank of India that he had opportunities of turning out writings of more than a transient interest. He was Chairman of the committee appointed by the Reserve Bank of India to prepare the Bank's history for the years 1935-51. As Chairman of the University Grants Commission, Chintaman delivered numerous lectures, which were subsequently compiled into two volumes, *In the Portals of the Indian Universities* and *On the Threshold of India's Citizenship*. To the same genre belongs another book *Aspects of Development and Reflections on Finance, Education and Society*. A book entitled *Economic Development in India: 1946-56* is a valuable contribution to the economic history of India, being the compilation of a series of Dadabhoy Nowrojee Memorial Lectures. There are volumes which bring together Chintaman's lectures at universities and other learned bodies, of which two call for special attention: one comprises a two-part lecture delivered in Washington under the auspices of the Per Jacobson Foundation entitled *The Usefulness of Monetary Means in Curbing Inflation* and the other is on *Hindi or Hindustani – Official Language or Lingua Franca of India*, a lecture delivered under the auspices of the Gandhi Memorial Foundation, Bombay. Also worthy of mention is the lecture on 'The Commonwealth as India Sees it', delivered in the Smuts Memorial Lecture series at Cambridge University on 31 May 1963. In view of his vast administrative experience, Chintaman was made Chairman of the Administrative Reforms Commission's Study Group on 'Business of Government and its Procedure', and prepared a report on the subject.

Of all Chintaman's writings in English the most important, of course, is his autobiography entitled *The Course of My Life*. This was published in 1974 by Orient Longman. A translation of this book in Marathi has been brought out.

Chintaman's recent writings are *Studies on Bhagavadgita, Buddha's Dhammapada*, and *Ashoka's Edicts*. They were published serially by the Andhra Mahila Sabha in its monthly *Vijaya Durga* and later published in book form. In the first,

Chintaman has tried to present the *Bhagavadgita* for the common man's understanding rather than in abstruse philosophical and metaphysical terms.

Of Chintaman's writings awaiting publication, mention must be made of *Gems from the Amarakosh*, a somewhat unique attempt to bring out the essence of the famous Sanskrit lexicon. One of the features of this work is that it gives the Latin equivalents for the Sanskrit names of trees, shrubs, and the birds known at the time of Amarasimha, the author of *Amarakosh*, who is believed to have lived around the year 1100 A.D.

As for me, I am no trained writer. I did write some short stories in my young age which were published by Telugu magazines such as *Sharada*, *Bharathi*, *Gruhalakshmi*, and *Andhra Mahila*. I also translated some interesting short stories of the noted novelist Prem Chand from Hindi into Telugu.

For nearly three decades thereafter I had occasion only to present papers and contribute articles. Among them were an address on Education of Girls and Women at the University of Calcutta (1962); a paper on Freedom from Hunger Campaign of the Indian National Committee (1962); 'Social Work is Both a Science and Art', an article contributed to the *Social Welfare* of August 1962 at the time of the laying of the foundation-stone of the Delhi School of Social Work; and a paper on Education and Training in Nutrition, for the World Food Congress in Washington (1963). I also contributed an article on 'Two Decades of Development and Welfare in Indian Villages' to the Souvenir brought out on the eve of the 71st session of the Indian National Congress held in Hyderabad in 1968.

In addition to this I had the opportunity of getting an invitation from the Duke of Edinburgh to write an article on the subject 'New Dimensions of Women's Life' which I did, and it was published in two volumes by the British Press under the series of 'The Duke of Edinburgh Lectures'. I have also been asked by the Planning Commission to bring out the *Encyclopaedia of Social Work in India* in three volumes and

they appointed me as the Chairman of the Editorial Board. I completed these three volumes which contained one thousand pages and were released by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at a function held in Delhi. Panditji had also written a 'Foreword' to these volumes. Soon after I joined the Planning Commission the first thing I undertook was to bring out a book entitled *Social Welfare in India* which consisted of seven hundred pages. I also brought out a book on *Social Legislation and its Role in Social Welfare*. Another book brought out by me was *Plans and Prospects of Social Welfare in India for a Decade*. *Social Welfare in India* became almost a reference book to both social administrators and social legislators both in India and abroad. I also delivered two lectures on 'Social and Economic Development in Developing Countries' in Bangkok at the Asian Institute of Economic Development and Planning at the request of its Director Dr. P.S. Narayana Prasad. These two lectures were printed by that institution and they were taken over by the United Nations for incorporation in the *Social Year Book*.

It was not till I fell ill in 1974 that I attempted writing a book. *The Stone that Speaketh* was started while I was convalescing after a serious illness for which I was treated at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi. I thought it would be an appropriate occupational therapy for me to divert my mind from miserable thinking about myself and my illness by engaging myself in writing something useful. (Both Chintaman's autobiography, *The Course of My Life*, and my *The Stone that Speaketh* were released at a function held at Hyderabad on 14 January 1978, the eighty-third birthday of Chintaman.

The present work I started under the same circumstances of illness, but this time it was Chintaman's illness in 1977. He spent nearly seven weeks in Bombay – a week in Tata Memorial Hospital and the balance in Bombay Hospital. I was staying with my brother-in-law, Sri Shantaram Deshmukh, in the Reserve Bank flat near Sachivalaya. Except the time I spent with Chintaman (an hour in the morning from nine to ten and an

hour in the evening from five to six in Bombay Hospital), the rest of the time I was at home. My mind was completely engaged about his illness. There were occasions when I felt that my own health was breaking down. The only prayer that I had was I should keep well so that my illness did not cause worry to him. The problem before me was how to engage my mind, because mental health is vital for a person's well-being. I made the decision to start writing *Chintaman and I* on the eve of the silver jubilee of our partnership in life.

Another book which I plan to write is on 'Unknown Soldiers – The Women Freedom Fighters of Andhra Pradesh'. It is within my personal knowledge that nearly one thousand women from Andhra Pradesh, young and old, illiterate, half-educated, and fully educated, jumped into the field during the freedom struggle and faced imprisonment, lathi charge, and even firing. Most of them were from rural areas. Some of them went to jail at a time when they were expecting babies. Most of these women were put into C class prisons where fifty to sixty were kept in a room and had the use of only one bathroom. I do not find many of these heroines living now. I wonder if even a few sentences were written about them while they were alive and fighting the battle for the freedom of the country. About one hundred of these sisters, after they were released, got themselves absorbed in the constructive work suggested by Mahatma Gandhi. Several famous social and educational institutions came to be established as a result of their efforts.

Since the services of these great women have not been brought out in any publication, I feel that I would be failing in my duty if I do not try to write about them and draw the attention of today's young people to the heroic part played by these women in securing the freedom for India.

Smt. Neti Sita Devi, an enthusiastic young colleague, approached me in 1974 to be allowed to write my biography in Telugu. I did not even reply to her letters for nearly a year. Ultimately I gave my consent after my husband convinced me

that I would be doing a wrong thing in refusing to agree, as he had found that women would be painstaking and sincere in undertaking such work. Smt. Neti Sita Devi succeeded in producing *Durgabai Deshmukh Jeevitha Charithra*. It was released on my sixty-ninth birthday (7 August 1977) by Smt. Sharada Mukherjee, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, at a function over which Chintaman presided.

XII. Summing Up

BY THE TIME Chintaman and I married in January 1953, we had acquired plenty of experience of men and matters. We had both already developed a set of values to guide our lives.

From my girlhood I have had the habit of introspection. It continues even today. I spend some time at night before I go to bed, or when I am alone, thinking of what I did during the day. If I made a mistake, I analyse why I made it. If I shouted at somebody in anger, I try to find out why I could not keep my composure. This introspection is in my view a good thing: it helps us to correct the mistakes we might have committed and to get to the right path. I regard my conscience as my Guru.

I found that Chintaman was also cast in the same mould. We consider that the time spent in schools and colleges for acquiring formal education does less good than the education we acquire by the process of thinking and self-questioning. The knowledge that we cull from our experience of men and matters is of greater importance than what we acquire from reading books, even the Vedas and the Puranas.

Both of us have come to believe in certain fundamental guidelines to govern our behaviour and attitude towards men and matters. We believe in the doctrine of detachment and dispensability. We do not believe that we are indispensable for any institution or office, or that the institutions which we have started or developed have done well only because of us. It is a

matter of pride for us to say that the institutions progressed more because of the workers whom we trained and placed in the right positions. Therefore the question of these institutions languishing in our absence does not arise. If there were the right kind of people and workers in position, they saw to it that the work started by us continued and prospered. So in whatever capacity we worked, we made it the first point to select the right workers and train them, and that too in large numbers. No tree, big or small, can flourish under a banyan that shuts out exposure to sunlight and therefore the possibility of growth.

It is not that I do not feel attached to the institutions which I have nurtured. But I am convinced that the feeling of detachment towards an institution proves to be good for it and indeed strengthens it. When the Andhra Mahila Sabha completed its own buildings in Madras, I do not know why but I became detached, or less attached to it. I remember that I used to go to the Sabha premises and sit on one of the cement benches provided outside for visitors. I did not feel like going into the Sabha buildings except when there was a meeting or a function. I felt that I had done my part, and it was for the younger generation to build up the Sabha's institutions.

I firmly believe that millions and billions of rupees cannot create what sincere, honest, and devoted workers can. Millions and billions come running after a devoted worker. That is why I believe that dedicated workers are the backbone of an institution or a country.

Chintaman also has this attitude. As long as he held an office, he kept himself absorbed in developing every side of the work in hand. But even as he went on working for the development of the institution, he would detach himself from it and train younger people for responsibilities – whether he was Governor of the Reserve Bank or Finance Minister or Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Administrative Staff College. He had the knack of finding out suitable persons and assigning the right man to the right job.

The other principle which we have followed is that of simple living and high thinking. Both of us have been persons of simple habits. I can hardly recall any occasion when we spent time on thinking of our career prospects. The fact is that offices came in search of us. For instance, on the eve of independence, in 1946, the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, asked Chintaman to join his Executive Council. Chintaman declined the invitation as he felt that he was not cut out for political life. I have narrated earlier how he declined to have his name considered, when the U.K. and the U.S.A. were prepared to back him for the post of Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, since he preferred to work in and for India.

I never imagined that I would be offered membership of the Planning Commission, or chairmanship of the Central Social Welfare Board. When, however, offices that we considered worthwhile came our way, we tried to do our very best. We knew well that the important thing is not coming to occupy a particular office but how you go out of office with your reputation unsullied.

In the same way Chintaman never expected that he would be given a Ramon Magsaysay Award for excellence in government work.

In the same way I never expected that I would be given Paul G. Hoffman Award for bringing about social change in India leading to economic development. But it was a pleasant surprise when I was told that I was selected for this Award out of forty-six countries. In the same way I was surprised when I was informed that I was awarded UNESCO World Peace Medal for my work in spreading literacy.

Our experience tells us that it is a good thing to say little and do a great deal. We spent comparatively little time in talking. It is not talk about planning but completion of a project or the achievement of an objective within the stipulated time that counts. We have therefore tried to talk less and do more. Long speeches and promises may please people initially, but a time is

bound to come when people treated only to speeches will lose their faith if results do not follow.

Chintaman and I cultivated the habit of plain speaking. We never said anything, as far as I can recall, merely to please people. Even though plain speaking was bitter, we did not mind it. If you have to call a spade a spade you should be prepared to do so, unmindful of its repercussions. I cannot say that this was always liked by all, but we thought that it was better to be bitter than to be insincere and pleasant.

We also believe strongly that it is good to do a good deed at the earliest possible time and not defer it. Life is uncertain and the life-span is limited. Why, then, wait to do a good thing? If you feel like doing something good day after tomorrow, do it tomorrow; and if you feel the impulse to do a good deed tomorrow, do it today.

I have heard some people say that they had done so many good turns to 'X' and 'Y' and that the latter have forgotten them and do not remember their benefactor. Chintaman and I did not like this attitude. We feel that it is wise to forget the good you might have done to others. Why expect others to remember or return the help you gave them? Did you expect a reward from them when you helped them? It is like going to the temple and offering a cocoanut because God has fulfilled your prayer. This just means that you think of God only when you expect him to help you. Would it not be better to go to the temple and worship God for the gift of the good earth, and for the gift of plant and animal life? It is a pity that many of us teach our children to go to the temple and pray to God on the eve of examinations. Children should rather be taught that success in examinations depends on their studies and hard work rather than on prayer to the gods.

Chintaman and I noticed on many occasions and in various situations that it is much easier for a person to deal with enemies outside rather than to deal with one's inner enemies, namely *kama* (pursuit of pleasure), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha*

(attachment), and *matsarya* (arrogance).

I am afraid of remaining inactive, because I know that when one has nothing to think of, many bad ideas surround one and dance in one's idle mind. Is not an idle mind the devil's workshop? When I mentioned this to my husband, he said that it was certainly very desirable to keep the mind occupied with good thoughts and good deeds, but some kind of relaxation was also necessary for one's brain; nature's law required one to take occasional rest since mental fatigue causes inefficiency.

Tolerance is a virtue that has always appealed to me. I admired the concept of Din-E-Ilahi propounded by the great Mughal Emperor Akbar who provided a common platform on which diverse people could come together for propagating the ideals of equality before God and law irrespective of religion, caste, creed, language, colour, and sex. The Panch Sheel outlined by Pandit Nehru was close to these principles. Chintaman believes with me that Din-E-Ilahi and Panch Sheel are doctrines that are good for humanity.

We felt that the services of one of us must be given free to the nation while the other partner earned. I am happy that we could adhere to this code of conduct over the past twenty-five years.

Whatever we have done individually or jointly for the nation, we consider it as only a drop in the ocean, considering the dimensions of the problems of poverty, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy, ill-health, and superstition.

Adjustment and compromise are necessary in human relations. But for our own part we have had little or no need for resorting to them. We have assimilated ourselves into each other in spirit and become an integrated whole. Quite a few friends of ours had wondered, when we married, how Durgabai the rustic and the stylish and handsome Chintaman would get on. They also knew that I, a Brahmin and a strict vegetarian, did not even use eggs in my diet, while Chintaman was a non-vegetarian. The reader knows how these supposed problems evaporated.

When we find ourselves alone and look back on our lives,

Chintaman and I feel happy and contented that we have lived a life which has been satisfying to ourselves and of some service to the community. We have tried to live according to certain principles which we value, and life has given us ample rewards.